

antenna

issue 02



This zine contains themes and imagery associated with the denpa genre, which may be disturbing or disorienting to some viewers. Content may include depictions of psychological distress, paranoia, delusion, derealization, intrusive thoughts, and unreliable perceptions of reality. You may encounter unsettling written or visual elements, abrupt tonal shifts, and references to violence, self-harm, or existential despair.

Denpa media often blurs the boundary between reality and hallucination, and may present fragmented narratives or emotionally intense perspectives without clear resolution. These elements are intentional and central to the genre's exploration of isolation, obsession, and the breakdown of meaning.

Viewer discretion is strongly advised.

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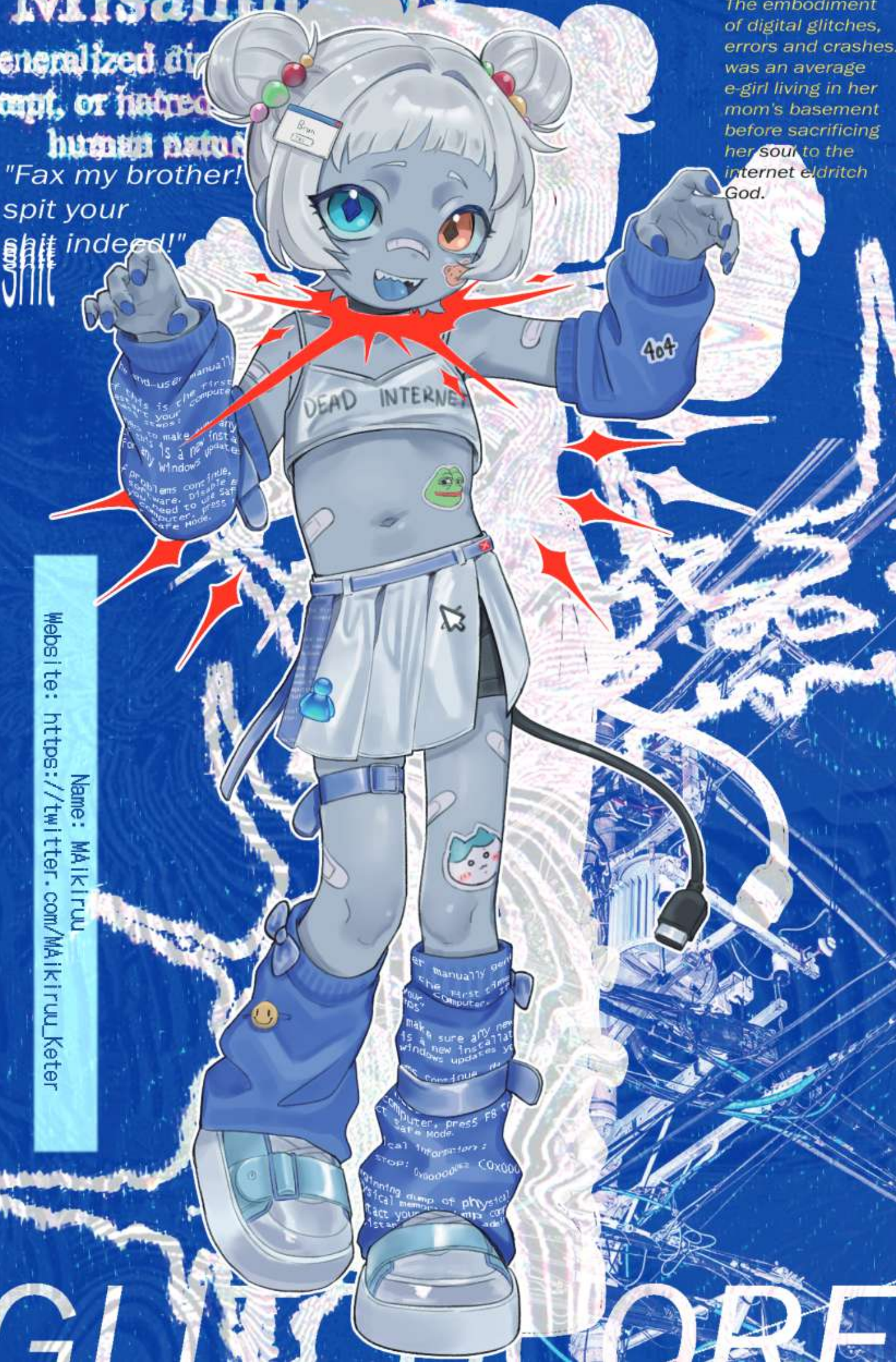
Misanthropy

Generalized distrust,
contempt, or hatred
toward the human race

"Fax my brother!
spit your
shit indeed!"

shit indeed!"

The embodiment
of digital glitches,
errors and crashes,
she was an average
e-girl living in her
mom's basement
before sacrificing
her soul to the
internet eldritch
God.



Website: https://twitter.com/Maikiruu_Keter

Name: Maikiruu

GLITCH CORE

Ethereal Systems and Fragmented Intimacy: Tenshi Dakara

“February 3rd, 5009. Humanity has gone wild. Their wicked hearts attract demons. Which is why God ordered His angels to kill.”

Tenshi Dakara (2005), a short visual novel/flash game hybrid developed by Osunoha, establishes a cosmology defined by theological detachment and systemic violence. The text reframes the divine as procedural and indifferent, reducing angels to functional entities within what is explicitly termed an “angel system.” These beings are not agents of will, but instruments of eradication—“full-body field[s] that destroy demons on impact.” This mechanization of the sacred renders bodies as fragile, permeable, and expendable. Violence is normalized, even softened, as the narrative filters brutality through a quiet, melancholic tone that is characteristic of denpa-inflected storytelling.

The narrative follows a nameless fallen-angel-turned-human protagonist who becomes infatuated with Sism, an angel system whose body is “riddled with holes” as a consequence of his function. Their first meeting in a bathhouse (a liminal, intimate space) establishes the work’s central visual and thematic contrast: the juxtaposition of bodily ruin and gentle observation. The protagonist’s quiet admiration of

Sism’s marred form underscores a recurring motif, wherein affection is intertwined with damage, and intimacy emerges not despite suffering, but through it. This encounter is followed by a confessional moment directed toward a stray pigeon, an unusual narrative device that further destabilizes conventional communication and perspective. What follows is marked by abrupt temporal disjunctions: an unexplained transition to an embrace (ending one), and later, a scene of Sism collapsed and dying, his “system... on its last legs,” requesting a place to rest. These discontinuities resist linear interpretation, instead presenting the narrative as a series of fragmented emotional states rather than a coherent sequence of events.

This fragmentation is reinforced by the work’s formal structure, including its lack of quotation marks and frequent shifts in perspective, which obscure speaker identity and blur the boundaries between internal thought and external dialogue. Such ambiguity invites

rereading to re-experience affect. The game's minimal interactivity—limited to a brief segment in which the player must intercept corrupted humans before they reach the protagonist—further emphasizes its prioritization of atmosphere over mechanics. Notably, the presence of multiple endings, including at least one that remains difficult to access, contributes to a sense of instability and indeterminacy. Whether these endings are conditionally triggered or partially randomized, their elusive nature aligns with the denpa genre's tendency to resist completion and definitive interpretation.

At the center of this structure is Sism, whose characterization embodies the emotional core of the work. As an angel system, he is defined by self-destructive labor, his body deteriorating under the demands of his role. Yet he remains soft-spoken, apologetic, and even cheerful, expressing relief at being allowed to rest despite the severity of his condition. This dissonance between visible devastation and subdued affect positions Sism as a quintessential denpa figure, one who has internalized suffering to the point of emotional distortion. His tragedy lies not solely in his death, but in the absence

of recognition that precedes it. As the narrative suggests, "Nobody ever told Sism, 'it's alright,'" reframing the story as a critique of interpersonal neglect and the conditional nature of worth. His replacement by a new angel following his death further underscores the system's indifference, reinforcing a somewhat gothic theme of disposability within divine hierarchies.

The repetition of phrases such as "Thank you" throughout the transcript functions as a destabilizing device, transforming expressions of gratitude into compulsive, hollow refrains. This linguistic looping mirrors the narrative's structural fragmentation, contributing to a sense of psychological unraveling. In later segments, particularly those associated with alternate endings, emotional needs become increasingly physicalized, with intimacy and recognition expressed through bodily closeness. While these shifts are thematically consistent with the protagonist's desire for affirmation, they can feel tonally abrupt, highlighting the work's tendency to prioritize affective intensity over narrative cohesion.

Visually, the game's gestural art style complements its thematic ambiguity, offering suggestive rather than definitive

representations of characters and environments. This aesthetic choice reinforces the ethereal quality of the work, allowing players to project meaning onto incomplete forms. The bathhouse setting, recurring across multiple scenes and endings, functions as a symbolic space of vulnerability, cleansing, and quiet observation, further anchoring the narrative's emotional landscape.

Ultimately, Tenshi Dakara operates as a denpa-gothic meditation on labor, loss, and the human desire to be seen. Its fragmented structure, minimal interactivity, and open-ended narrative resist traditional modes of engagement, instead inviting players to inhabit a space of unresolved feeling. The work's enduring impact lies not in its plot, but in its articulation of a simple, devastating absence: the failure to affirm, to recognize, and to permit rest. In this sense, Sism's story and the protagonist's response to it suggest that the deepest tragedy is not death itself, but a life lived without ever being told it was enough.

If you'd like to play Tenshi Dakara yourself, you can find it at <https://ahito.com/game/boyslove/big/sisumu/> or watch an English subtitled playthrough of it on Denpa Archivist's YouTube channel.

Review by Denpa Archivist



Antenna (2025) is a collaborative zine situated within the niche subculture of *derpa media*, a loosely defined aesthetic and thematic category associated with psychological unease, dissociation, and fragmented perception. As a self-published, community-driven work, *Antenna* exemplifies the long-standing tradition of zines as alternative publishing spaces that privilege experimentation, subcultural identity, and personal expression over formal cohesion or commercial viability. This essay examines *Antenna* as both an artistic object and a cultural artifact, arguing that its significance lies in its ability to embody—rather than merely describe—the affective qualities of *derpa*.

Derpa as Affective Framework

Derpa, often characterized by themes of alienation, paranoia, and distorted reality, rejects rigid definition. Instead, it functions more effectively as an affective framework: a way of feeling rather than a codified genre. *Antenna* operates within this framework by prioritizing atmosphere over narrative clarity. The zine does not attempt to explain *derpa* in aesthetic or theoretical terms; rather, it immerses the reader in its emotional logic.

Across its pages, contributors engage with recurring motifs such as isolation, obsession, and the instability of perception. These themes are articulated through a collage of styles, including fragmented texts and disjointed imagery that resist traditional narrative logic. The work is not intended to be understood, but as a space to be experienced.

Visual Aesthetics and Materiality

The visual design of *Antenna* plays a central role in its communication strategy. The layout is intentionally cluttered, featuring a mix of hand-drawn illustrations, digital graphics, and printed text. These visual elements are not merely decorative; they function as extensions of the zine's thematic concerns.

The use of visual noise and dissonance mirrors the psychological states explored within the text. By disrupting visual coherence, the zine evokes the same instability it seeks to represent. This approach aligns with broader trends in experimental print media, where material form and content are intertwined. In *Antenna*, the page itself becomes a site of distortion, reinforcing the sense of unease that defines *derpa*.

Multiplicity and Cohesion

As a multi-contributor project, *Antenna* presents a range of voices and styles. The written content includes personal reflections, fictional fragments, and explicit explorations, each engaging with *derpa* from a slightly different perspective. Despite this diversity, the zine maintains a remarkable degree of thematic cohesion.

This cohesion emerges not from editorial oversight, but from a shared emotional resonance. Each piece contributes to an overall atmosphere of psychological tension and emotional intensity. However, this consistency also creates a sense of claustrophobia, blurring together, making it difficult to distinguish individual voices. The lack of clear boundaries further contributes to this effect, creating a sense of immersion that is both compelling and disorienting.

Zine Culture and Subcultural Identity

Antenna must also be understood within the context of zine culture. Zines have long functioned as spaces for experimentation and subcultural expression, often operating outside mainstream channels. *Antenna* continues this tradition, providing a platform for voices that might otherwise be silenced. Its collaborative nature is a key feature, reflecting the community-driven ethos of zine culture.

The zine's DIY ethos—evident in its production style and distribution—reinforces its authenticity. It does not exist to translate *derpa* for a general audience; instead, it operates as a space where creators and readers engage directly with the material. This hands-on approach may limit its accessibility but enhances the zine's integrity as a cultural artifact.

Limitations and Accessibility

While *Antenna* succeeds in creating a cohesive and immersive experience, its reliance on abstraction presents challenges. Readers unfamiliar with *derpa* may find the zine difficult to engage with, as it offers little contextual grounding. Additionally, the lack of structural organization can produce a sense of monotony, as similar tones and themes recur without clear progression.

These limitations, however, are not necessarily failures. Rather, they reflect the zine's commitment to its aesthetic and conceptual principles. The disorientation experienced by the reader is not a flaw; it is a deliberate choice, central to the zine's intent.

Conclusion

Antenna stands as a compelling example of how zines can function as both artistic experiments and cultural documents. By foregrounding affect over explanation, it captures the elusive qualities of *derpa* in a way that more formal analyses might struggle to achieve. Its visual and textual fragmentation, while potentially limiting, are integral to its success as an immersive work.

Ultimately, *Antenna* is less a publication to be read sequentially than an experience to be navigated. It invites the reader to tune into a specific emotional frequency—one defined by unease, intimacy, and ambiguity—and in doing so, it affirms the continued relevance of zines as spaces for experimental and subcultural expression.

Antenna

2026 DENPA ARCHIVIST

The person who wrote this isn't real. Or, is he? That's what the world believes, but he knows that he's made of blood, bone, and bile. He believes he is here and somewhere else all at once with his vacant stare, peering into the horizon of a city he's tried call to home for several years but can't. He hesitates. He hates it. Nothing around him is recognizable. He's not supposed to be here. He was never supposed to be here. Worse, he can see himself every day reflected through a page or a screen. Laid bare before thousands upon thousands of strange faces, forced to reconcile with the knowledge that he exists yet he isn't "real". That person is me.

What is "real"?

I ask myself that each day. I peer into the mirror before me, and the longer I look, the more it sinks in that the person looking back at me is someone completely unknown to me. "I don't belong here," is what I tell myself. "I am someone else entirely."

For the longest time, I've hated my face. It always looked wrong, felt wrong even. Yet, when I look at the faces inked on the pages of my books or programmed into sprites in my video games, I feel right. I feel so much better looking at them, imagining this face in that format, flattened into simple colors and shapes. "I don't want to be real," I tell myself. "I want to exist without this burden of a body. I want to exist as I was meant to, as art." I am imagination made

The Person Who Wrote This Isn't Real

by LIONDRAKES

<https://liondrakes.neocities.org/>

Bio: LIONDRAKES (he/xe) is an alterhuman otaku who loves to write! In xyr essay, "The Person Who Wrote This Isn't Real", he discusses his relationship with fictional identity, schizophrenia, and how denpa helped shape xyr sense of mad pride.

made mortal. I am living fiction, alive and unwell. I take residence in an unending loop of reality and unreality, channeling my connection with unseen, immaterial worlds through a keyboard and an open document. Above all else, I am a person. I cannot change the fact that my mind is a labyrinth nor would I ever want to. I believe there's a small sense of freedom in the complexities of my mind, or my madness if you will. I don't like mulling over the stressful, oftentimes degrading parts of my experiences, though I'm sure there's more than enough interest in it from those who think people should define themselves by their hardships. I think those hardships should be acknowledged, and so should the moments that ground us as people and enrich our lives.

I once looked back at my life and thought: "I'd be happier living as a fictional character." The end of my life would be marked by narrative purpose, at least. I wouldn't truly die. I would exist in the memories of so many people, weighing on their minds like a beloved muse. I didn't care if it was out of fondness, perversion, distaste, or some inexplicable fixation over who or what I am as long as I meant something to someone. Anxieties over death, finality and the loneliness therein wouldn't terrorize my thoughts anymore, and that was enough for me.

Four years ago, I looked back at my life again and thought: "Maybe I am a fictional character, and I was put on this planet for a reason." Why that reason had to include annoying me with

an endlessly meta reminder that I am “not real” to the general public is beyond me.

I must ask again, though: “What is real?”

I say it’s what we make of it. We live in a world where stories have held so much sway over what we see and want to explain. It begs the question of what constitutes as real and not real. You could argue that if something exists, then it constitutes as real. Therefore, all people, places, systems, etc. from fiction are technically real since they were brought into this world through artistic means. If we run with that concept, the boundary between what is real and what is not real hardly exists in of itself.

One might assume I don’t openly discuss my perspectives unless I’m in the presence of the right people. If so, one would be correct. I’m both schizotypal and schizoaffective, and even if I didn’t experience any disorders within the schizophrenia spectrum, I feel as though my understanding of myself wouldn’t change. Neither would my understanding of fiction and its transcendence beyond what we deem as “real”.

Before I learned what denpa was, I had a soft spot for media that used horror to explore intimate and emotional subjects. In a way, I felt like I could navigate my problems through said media. For example: I once feared myself for the way my mind works. There are other caveats to my identity that instilled fear in me as well. All of this was based on how others would treat me, whether it was because of the color of my skin, my gender, my spirituality, so on and so forth. I appreciate when this fear is addressed in horror stories. After all, what sounds like a novel concept to some can be a reality for others.

While this approach is found all throughout the horror genre, I’m admittedly biased towards visual novels and their execution of it. Higurashi no Naku Koro ni was my entry point to this narrative style and still stands to be one of my favorite games of all time, 8:11 being a top contender behind it. I credit both games for my love of visual novels. Recently, Soundless, is it okay for me to live and Milk inside a bag of milk inside a bag of milk (I’ve yet to play its sequel) have been added to my roster of favorites as well; Soundless in particular reminds me of the stories that catapulted my love for the genre, making for a nostalgic experience as I read it. These feelings also sparked my curiosity in denpa. Although I discovered each game at different points in time, they all did their part in bridging the gap between the world I felt estranged from and the world(s) I felt a sense of belonging in.

Eventually, I came around to learning about denpa as a medium. I should’ve expected as much, but I was pleasantly surprised to find this medium was bigger than the games I played. The music, the usage of technology, the familiar yet isolated atmospheres that shape its aesthetics, and of course, the actual history surrounding denpa as recorded in Japan— it was a storm far greater than I could’ve imagined. The more my interest expanded, the more I wanted to get swept up in its chaos. Although I don’t consider myself a character tied to denpa, I can’t help but think of myself when analyzing characters in this medium. I see someone who is alienated, eccentric, erratic, and unflinchingly human. It’s as if I’m staring in the mirror again; only this time, I can face who’s on the other end. Unlike many of these characters, violent episodes aren’t common or recurring for me. Nonetheless, my mind is full of turbulence. There is no calm before the storm, only whirlwinds that wear me down no matter how hard I try to withstand them. I feel vulnerable almost every second of the day because of how fractured everything is on the inside. Yet, I feel relieved that art such as this exists. It’s not an escape from my circumstances. Rather, it’s where I can give the intense thoughts and urges I experience an outlet. That is what this medium means to me.

Another thing that attracts me to denpa is in its no-holds-barred portrayals, this medium brings together people like me. People whose disconnect with their surroundings permeate not only into their interests and relationships but their self-perception as well. Denpa also indirectly introduced me to the concept of Mad Pride. Denpa and the Mad Pride movement are separate things, but I’ve noticed that the energy of denpa’s fanbase aligns with the principles of mad pride in several ways. The acceptance of mental illnesses and disabilities as social-cultural experiences, challenging infrastructures that seek to censor or “cleanse” society of people whose experiences aren’t “respectable” of the status quo, encouraging community amongst those with mental illnesses and disabilities, etc. It’s not lost on me that, much like members of the Mad Pride movement, many fans of denpa are people who either have mental illnesses and disabilities of their own or discuss subject matter involving our experiences.

In denpa, I come face-to-face with the realities our world wants to rid itself of— realities like mine. I’d much rather explore the freedom of seeing people like me, interacting with them and assessing their circumstances unfiltered as I can through this medium than continue having to hide these qualities about myself or others like me for the comfort of a society built on hypocrisy and prejudice. Would-be well-to-do societies prioritize surgically removing all things “unsightly” from their purview, while the rest of us are expected to quietly rot under their scalpels. Out of sight, out of mind, fully sterilized. Contrary to what the average person may believe: I do not suffer in believing that I am a fictional character and that I belong in fiction as opposed to the world I currently live in.

Fiction has been a part of my identity for as long as I can remember, long before I even knew it was possible for me to identify in the way that I do now. If anything, I suffer from the rejection and denial of agency I am subjected to by other members of society. I suffer from the infantilization that’s attributed to all mentally ill people, if not the antagonism that perceives me as a “threat”, “nuisance” or “embarrassment” to those around me. If a listening ear is too costly of a privilege for us to have, then what makes anyone think these societies are ideal places to live?

I’ve learned my fair share of lessons through the art of storytelling as a writer, a reader and a fictional person all rolled into one. If there is anything denpa has taught me, it is to embrace my madness. Do not bury it in a shallow grave. Do not cage it behind rusting bars. Do not forsake who you are for anyone. I cannot be denied. I cannot be controlled. The only one in charge of my narrative is me. Denpa’s also not alone in teaching me this lesson; apart from the medium I’ve come to love and respect, I went on to find communities of others like me. They are my greatest source of strength. I examine the madness we all share, and everything feels a little less suffocating. For once, I feel like I can be confident in who I am.

So, what else is there left to say? The person who wrote this isn’t real. He is a fictional character in the flesh. He browses the Visual Novel Database on occasion, making lists of worlds he would like to visit through his digital window. He wants to get better at writing and reading Japanese, and maybe if he’s proactive enough, speaking it as well. He imagines himself in the form of sprites and his environment as CGs. His thoughts shift into text boxes, and he envisions pause menus in moments of absentmindedness until he regains his focus once more. He knows the world around him is not safe, not for him or anyone like him. Yet, he lives with his head held high and his heart opened. He will let anyone and anything in if they let him. That person is me, and I am at peace with myself.

It is only in spring when everything begins to resemble some kind of dream. As my own dreams always seem to possess the same verdant qualities and dense greenery that stretches as far as the eye can see. Where each step in the damp earth sinks momentarily letting the vibrant shades of browns and green bleed over the skin of my bare feet. As they're enveloped completely in the viscera of dirt and plant life. In the moment before reality can set in, I can sink forever and be left buried and still as the trees. But dimensionality brings in the presence of my surroundings from outside the fog of dreams. Where the sky looms first through the leaves of dense canopies and gargantuan clouds billow by on the passing breeze. Soon when it rains again the droplets of water will ripple across the puddles left behind and ponds will swell in their excess. Becoming a haunting iconography that lives inside me but only reveals its full details in these recurring dreams. For great periods of my life I walked past this pond until months turned into years more simultaneously than gradually. When the mornings were especially cold and the distant view across the surface of the water was not obscured by the glistening blades of grass there were the silhouettes of

Cruelty

Name: Abramelin

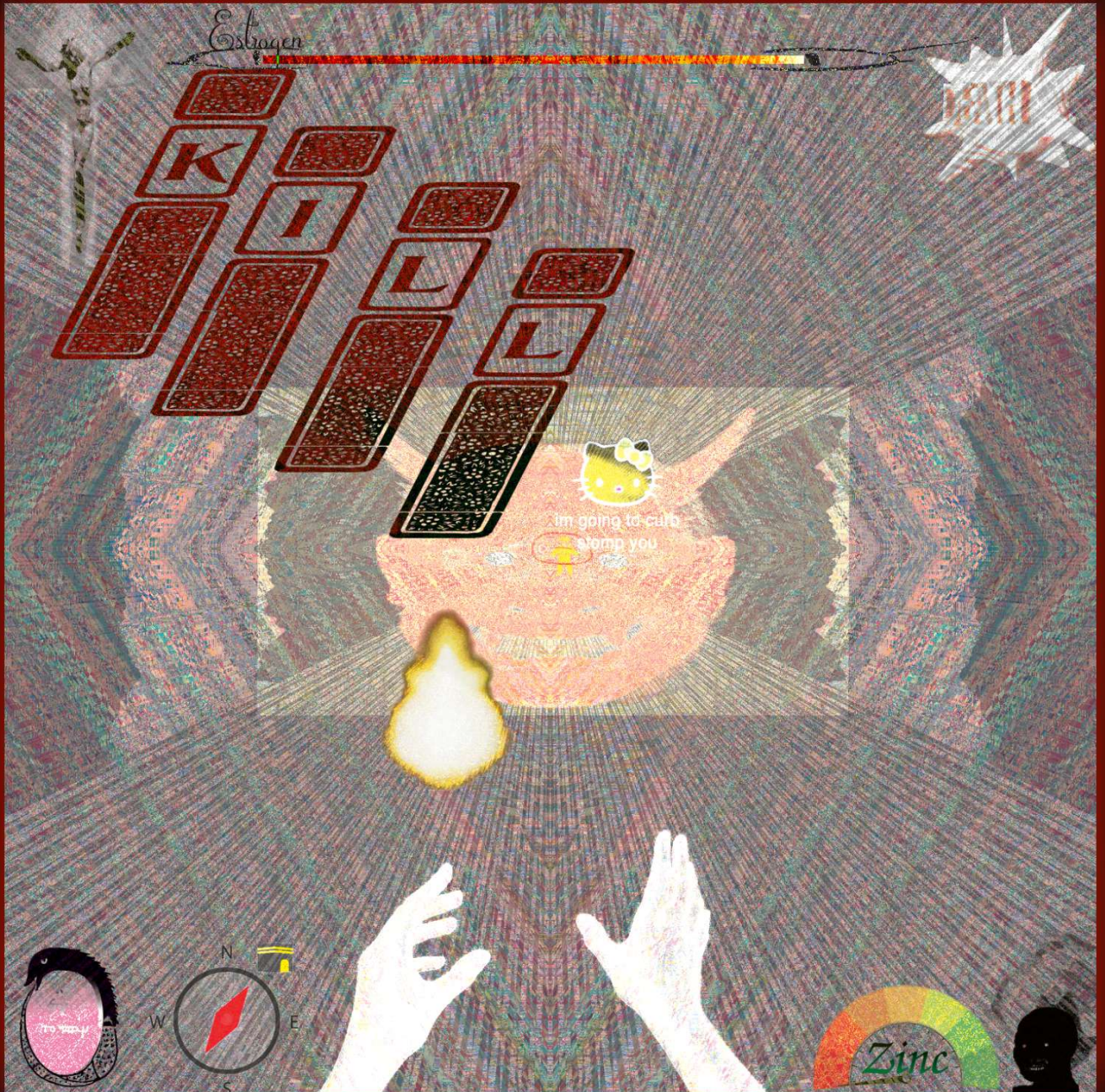
Twitter: UnboundTerrors

Bio: I write as much as I can about things that I feel and I feel like that is often denpa aligned.

ducks swimming in the water. Would it have made any difference to have experienced it with you in the shivering cold with breath turned to smoke in front of our faces. Instead of the disjointed pictures through texts of an unreachable place. It becomes an indistinguishable thing when flattened and reduced to a memory worn away by the compulsive turning from beginning to end and end to beginning again.

Each walk blends into the other extending somewhere unreachable by time. Although it was often cold it was not always morning. Because sometimes it was not spring but the middle of a winter, harsh but without snow. In which we walked for hours and there was very little grass at all on the exposed earth and slippery cobbled stones. Under a sky that was only a mass of grey diffused light painting the world in pale hues. The culmination replacing the endless rows of homes with rows of names on tombs in the cemeteries at the edge of town. Holding hands and defiant to death. Doomed to unmarked graves once the memory fades.

Name: 肉魂菩薩
Bio: feline flesh spiriqqt.



supermarket breast

a distended yawn
the doldrums of stucco staccato yucca blossoms, redwood brick
canyons
canonizing and cannibalizing their forefathers. overhead beamers
breaking canopies; jagged jumprope cables; impromptu properties
penning an upended skyline.
vestigial decadents singing
decades formed from hammock cocoons, their near legible nymphets
torn suture to sternum. too young to process regression, they progress
further and further afield. a swallow's luncheon; a piece of my heart
swallowed stiller.
i nod off the deep end
crisscrossing nematodes and diodes, digitigrade anamorphics striking
parallel play smut set in my backyard hovels. as i toe the line i knead
horoscopes into pleasant isotopes; knitted escapees and escapades
fogging out familiar warrens.
stop walks leaking nevermores
longitudinal talks at intersections of dopamine receptors digging through
my
open chest cavity. how do you dos and how do you says and surely
how do you communicate with another facsimile of a human being
long out of touch.
the clouds grant me their least
bestest impression of a grimace, gutter serializations pouring from
the heavens the harrows and yes, the hovels, filling filled or maybe
empty streets with runoff daydreams; i place my boot there. i place my
boot and burst into starshine.
there's a supermarket
that looms larger than cornerstores and cornerstones. well no, it's more
like
a market, not really super at all, the neon idols sketching jigsaw puzzles
questions hanging off whole foods hanging off no foods hanging off
every food ever conceived.
automatic eye sockets wink
as the gates sally open, revealing artificial warbles, manmade
confectionaries
ecclesial and ecstatic varieties. aluminum foil squeaky toys. gulch
breath
candles. out of stock cardstock. a steel plushie. a seal wrench. the
earth its air
my teeth your throat.
flatscreens looping flatlines looping
planets rotating on gyroscopes scooping out idle aisles of ill apertures;
a girl
her dog, of the helping kind, with a pastry snout and an ear for car
crash
codependents. she takes a drag off filament innards wafting over cup
ramen
9x19mm parabellum price tags.
nothing interrupts my vow
silence i take, as her body plunges into phantasmagoria and fathoms;
dull
casing expenditures erasing figments in neat, clean, cubical diagrams
of the human diaphragm; saltshaker hair triggers; chickpea pustules
and sweet cherry succotash.
placing my fingers there
on the farside of the otherside, right past the bacon bits and bellied
groans
i grab a dull caper from her dull cadaver, holding it up for inspection
way way way up high. speckled condolences and dust bunny spectrals
hop
along my tile floored skirt.
february serenades
leave me coldest. no love for the glut of winsome spring. it taunts me
with its pollen spruced windowsills, that green gout covering swathes
each aisle in abject foliated glades snaking over corpses of girls that
look like
that one or maybe me.

Name: Morgan Schindler

Website:

<https://loosecollectionofthoughts.wordpress.com/>

Bio: I write poetry and short fiction
experimenting with values of distortion and
clarity and the brutality wedged therein.
Anything that sits in that shaky in-between
really speaks to me, where the uncertainty
and space lets the mind transmute strange
images. Southern gothic fiction, shoegaze,
late 90s / early 2000s digipaint anime in that
transitional limbo, torn up cityscapes and
consumerism, and of course, denpa. I want
my words to fill those spaces in you, more
than anything.



TABS 3/12 - 3/22

Name: Jan E. Mehmedovic

Handle: @insekt_

The background of the entire page is a collage of various daggers and swords. Some are shown in full, while others are just hilts or blades. The colors are muted, mostly in shades of brown, tan, and olive green, giving it an antique or historical feel.

Types of daggers
Finnish-language surnames
Soviet (council)
Picea abies
Naraka
Treaty ports
Daly City, California
Princess Maker 2
Renaldo Kuhler
List of visionary tall buildings
and structures
Special Purpose Individual Weapon
Michael A. Aquino
McMartin preschool trial
Cyrillic O variants
Humid subtropical climate
Italian Communist Party
French Communist Party
List of terrorist incidents in France
Our Lady of Sorrows
New chronology (Fomenko)
Rotten.com
Bludgeoning Angel Dokuro-Chan
New Albany, Pennsylvania
Molten-salt battery
Hugh Everett III
Cardassian
Breast cancer screening
Breast cancer
Teeth blackening
Dazzle camouflage
Hairless dog



Name: Joshua Jeon /
drunkcrunkfranken
Bluesky: drunkcrunkfranken
Bio: Shot on Canon Powershot
SD1100IS. I like digicams! I
post my photos (and board
game projects) on my Bluesky!



good morning, world



i want to connect

Name: Lazuwu
Twitter @lazuwu



Blood smelled fresh under my nose.
Like iron sharpened and cleaned before
the final
decapitation, it ran into my mouth and
dripped
from my chin. The illuminating screen
of my laptop
still plays in the background. I was
playing "Yunyun Syndrome! Rhythm
Psychosis" before
my brain rotted to its final stages.
I have been isolated in my room for
months. The maid poster stares back at
my moldy body; flies surround me while
she greets them
with a charismatic smile.
Bastard-bitch.

Strange, strange, strange! The
internet's my plot
and my trembling hands shall be the
catalyst.
Dumb, dumb, dumb! Hear my plea for
another pill,
hear my plea before my guts spill.

Name: Lai

THE ROTTING RUSH OF DENPA-SYNDROME

BLÜME+GEIST//: Frühromantik and the Denpa Subject

An Article by mariyasha

I. The Fevered Antenna

When Takuji in Subahibi (2010) realizes that if the entire world is symbolic, then rearranging symbols will change reality, he stands where Novalis stood in 1798: consciousness does not discover meaning but produces it through its particular formation. Post-Kant, we cannot access the thing-in-itself, only our representations.

Where post-Kantian idealism sought systematic repair, the Frühromantiker refused. If the Absolute remains unknowable to discursive reason, it might still be experienced through aesthetic practice—poetry, art, the fragment. The Romantic project was re-enchantment: recovering unity with reality without regressing to pre-critical naivety. If we cannot achieve totality, we must develop forms adequate to incompleteness—the fragment, the infinite novel, the life lived as perpetual *Bildung*.

The denpa inherits this completely. When the term denpa (電波, “electromagnetic wave”) emerged in the 1980s describing disconnection from consensus reality—reception of signals no one else can hear—it resurrected Frühromantik’s central problematic. The psychiatrist diagnoses illness; the narrative structure refuses confirmation. What if the one receiving transmissions has not failed at normal consciousness but achieved a different formation entirely?

She is not choosing this the way you choose an aesthetic. The door is heavy. The world outside is physically painful, every interaction a frequency overload. She didn’t select “denpa consciousness”—it selected her when normal filtering mechanisms failed. Despite this, the denpa alone in her room is using aesthetic fragments to construct the only totality available to post-Kantian consciousness: a personal mythology that makes her legible to herself. She continues the Romantic project: the infinite, singular formation of consciousness that refuses the world’s claim to totality.

II. The Blue Flower and Fichteian Refusal

Novalis’s Heinrich von Ofterdingen remains unfinished—and must remain unfinished. The Blue Flower structures desire without satisfying it, making longing itself the content of life. Subahibi enacts this perfectly: multiple perspectives on the same events, none authoritative. The “End Sky” functions as the Blue Flower—the object of infinite longing that would justify existence. When Takuji and Yuki achieve their synthesis, it’s bracketed by knowledge of all the madness that led there. The sublime moment is achieved only through systematic destruction of consensus reality. This is Novalis’s structure: the absolute pursued through intensification of singular consciousness.

Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*: the I posits itself through opposition to the Not-I. Consciousness exists only by encountering what it is not. Yet it must continue positing itself, or cease to be consciousness at all. The denpa subject lives this crisis daily. In Boogiepop, Touka and Boogiepop share a body but remain distinct consciousnesses, each a Not-I to the other’s I, yet neither can exist alone. The duality is not illness but the structure of consciousness itself.

The denpa hikikomori intensifies this further. The room becomes antenna, consciousness becomes receiver, and the Not-I includes transmissions arriving from sources she cannot identify—electromagnetic waves, signals bleeding through, frequencies no one else can verify. She has constructed a defensible space but cannot fully defend it, maintains opposition to consensus reality while unable to stabilize even her private alternative.

When the concerned friend tells her she needs to “reconnect,” they demand she abandon her particular formation in favor of standardized consciousness. But what if her “electromagnetic sensitivity” is actually a more rigorous engagement with the post-Kantian condition? What if refusing standard filters is not failure but philosophical commitment?

Geist is not collective consciousness but the capacity of individual consciousness to participate in the infinite while remaining radically singular. The denpa's Geist is hers alone—her particular way of receiving transmissions, her singular arrangement of symbols. It cannot be shared. It can only resonate with other singular formations across the distance that separates all consciousness.

III. Fragment, Symphilosophie, and Magical Idealism

Athenäum Fragment 206: "A fragment, like a miniature work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a porcupine." Higurashi no Naku Koro ni (2002–2006) makes fragment structure its ontological premise. Each chapter presents the same temporal span yet contradicts the others fundamentally. The fragments refuse synthesis—they are complete worlds, each internally consistent yet mutually exclusive. The reader must hold multiple incompatible realities simultaneously, must develop consciousness capable of entertaining contradictions without demanding dissolution.

The denpa subject's consciousness mirrors this. She holds fragments that contradict—memories that cannot all be true, a selfhood assembled from incompatible pieces. She does not attempt synthesis because synthesis would require violence against the fragments. Instead she maintains them in their separateness, lets them speak across their contradictions, allows meaning to emerge from constellation rather than system.

The Jena Romantics practiced Symphilosophie—philosophizing together through resonance rather than consensus. Each consciousness remained singular yet thought—together through fragments. The denpa's Symphilosophie happens entirely through media and network. She has never met the creators whose work shapes her consciousness. Yet she is in constant dialogue with their fragments, creating alone but never in vacuum.

These are not communications in the standard sense but fragments that might resonate with other singular formations—recognized by someone else also alone, also receiving transmissions no one else can verify, also forming Geist according to their own internal necessity. This is thinking-together that happens in radical isolation, resonance across the void that separates consciousness from consciousness.

Novalis called his philosophy "magical idealism"—consciousness could transform reality by recognizing reality as symbolic. Subahibi makes this explicit: if reality consists of symbols, consciousness can reorganize those symbols. But the game is also Wittgensteinian—we are bounded by the symbols available to us. When Takuji rearranges symbols, is he transforming reality or only his relationship to it?

Takuji's symbolic manipulations worked—but only for him. Magical idealism clarifies its scope: consciousness transforms its world but cannot make that transformation authoritative for others. This is all denpa experience: the reorganization of symbols produces real effects within the particular consciousness doing the reorganizing, but these effects remain private, unverifiable, singular. The magic works, but only within the boundaries of her singular Geist.

IV. Decreation and the Empty Vessel

Simone Weil: "We possess nothing in the world except the power to say 'I.' That is what we have to give to God." The mystic path requires decreation—active unmaking of the self as the most extreme form of agency: choosing to vacate the position of sovereign subject. The "empty vessel" denpa figure performs this as ongoing practice. She actively empties herself, refusing the demand that she construct stable, bounded identity.

Puella Magi Madoka Magica (2011) crystallizes this. Homura's time loops enact the Romantic subject's nightmare: consciousness that accumulates without redemption, that must continue forming itself through repetition without hope of synthesis. But Madoka's transformation inverts the logic. She empties herself of particularity, choosing to become not a person but a principle—a law operating across all timelines. "I pray for the solar storm" finds its answer here: Madoka becomes the cosmic disruption, the electromagnetic event that rewrites reality's source code.

Homura's response completes the dialectic. She cannot accept Madoka's disappearance into concept. In Rebellion (2013), Homura reconstructs a world where Madoka can exist as bounded person, even if this requires becoming the devil. This is the Romantic crisis: which is more real—the particular consciousness in all its singular formation, or the universal principle that transcends particularity? Homura chooses particularity even at the cost of damnation.

The denpa recognizes both positions as her own. She empties herself because she must, yet remains grounded within her particularity. She decreates while insisting this decreation is hers, her unique way of being consciousness. The paradox sustains her: she is both Madoka (choosing emptiness as freedom) and Homura (refusing to let particularity dissolve).

V. Network as Static

The internet realizes what the Romantics could only imagine: infinite text, every fragment connected. But she does not inhabit this network as smooth facilitator. She is jammed in the wrong frequency. She is the static itself.

This Romanticism must be understood not as the Jena salon's collaboration but as late Hölderlin alone in his tower, as Novalis grief-stricken, as Simone Weil in exile. This is the Romanticism of the subject who has been marked, broken, unable to return to normalized perception. The denpa does not choose disconnection as aesthetic pose. Disconnection has chosen her.

In *Jisatsu no Tame ni 101 no Houhou*, the protagonist faces the choice every denpa subject faces: "Either become as emotionless as the environment around him, or become imaginative enough to transcend monotony." Many choose Gray—the slow death of filtering-down until nothing reaches you. The denpa cannot choose Gray. The frequencies have already penetrated. She can only choose what to make of them: let them dissolve her or organize them according to her singular necessity even knowing it will mark her as jammed frequency, as broken.

But receiver becomes transmitter. The denpa who cannot properly receive reality's signals begins broadcasting on a different frequency. Her fragments are not failed attempts at normal communication. They are transmissions on a frequency only other jammed receivers can detect. She broadcasts from exile—and this disconnection allows her signal to reach others equally isolated, equally unable to tune to everyone else's frequencies.

Simone Weil wrote from self-imposed exile, refusing sacraments, refusing community, practicing decreation until she became almost nothing. From this silence she transmitted something that reached those who came after—those who recognized in her radical isolation their own condition, who found in her refusal the quiet comfort of knowing someone else had

walked this path to its end and had made it mean something.

"I pray for the solar storm." This prayer reveals what she cannot escape. She prays for disconnection while posting, desires the solar storm while transmitting through the network. She is caught between yearning for absolute silence and needing to document that yearning. This impossibility generates transmissions that reach other jammed frequencies, others who are also praying for the solar storm, also jammed yet somehow receiving each other's signals.

The network for her is not infrastructure but interference pattern. Her fragments enter not smoothly but as interruptions, as errors. When another denpa encounters her blog, it is because both are tuned to frequencies the network was never designed to carry, because both are jammed in ways that accidentally align, because corruption of signal produces —intermittently—moments of recognition between receivers who should not be able to receive each other at all.

This is the late Romantic structure: Hölderlin writing in increasingly private language, yet these poems would be recognized as prophecy. Novalis dying at 28, fragments scattered, yet generating responses across centuries. Weil starving herself, writing notebooks unpublished until after her death, yet those notebooks would become sacred texts for those who felt too much, who could not filter the world's suffering into something manageable, who needed to know someone else had borne this hypersensitivity to its absolute limit.

The denpa is their heir. She broadcasts from disconnection. Her isolation is not failure but the condition of her transmission. She reaches the ones who matter: the other jammed frequencies. They find her fragments through the static. And in this recognition—partial, flickering—something like *Symphilosophie* happens. Not convivial collaboration but solidarity of the isolated, thinking-together of those fundamentally alone, resonance between transmissions that arrive broken yet somehow still legible to those who know how to read static.

VI. The Solar Storm as Eschaton

"I pray for the solar storm." This is desire for utter disconnect—the electromagnetic event so total that all frequencies would be obliterated, the network itself collapsed. The solar storm would make her condition universal: the inability

to receive clean signal. Her singular formation would be revealed not as illness but as prophecy.

But the solar storm, like the Blue Flower, functions through perpetual deferral. It structures longing itself as the content of life, justifying infinite Bildung without satisfying it. The denpa knows this. Her prayer is not naive wish but the practice of maintaining desire as the content of life itself.

She is heir to Novalis, to Schlegel, to the entire Jena circle. Two centuries have passed but the crisis remains: consciousness recognizing itself as unable to achieve synthesis with the world, requiring infinite formation without hope of redemption. The forms have changed—garret becomes bedroom, journal becomes posts—but the structure persists.

Geist forming itself singularly, infinitely, against all demands that it normalize or dissolve. Philosophy happens through aesthetic practice. Symphilosophie happens in radical isolation. And the denpa—alone in her room, receiving frequencies no one else can verify, choosing fragment over system, her own singular formation over any collective that would erase her particularity—continues the Romantic project in its only remaining form:

The infinite, singular, impossible formation of consciousness that refuses.

The solar storm approaches. The transmissions continue. The Blue Flower recedes. The denpa persists, philosophizing through fragments, heir to a tradition that knew consciousness could not be standardized without violence, that recognized in refusal a form of thought, that made of longing and isolation and electromagnetic sensitivity not pathology but the very condition of Geist forming itself against the world's false claim to totality.



Fanart by Denpa Archivist

Takatou Keisuke And Hypersexuality: An Analysis



Up until a couple of years ago I'd only had a passing interest in visual novels as a medium, but decided that I'd make a serious effort to get into them at the beginning of last year, and the option at the top of my list was Euphoria.

I knew about fifteen minutes in that I had found something special to me, and completed the game in two weeks. Everything about Euphoria drew me into it, from the sexually violent and taboo imagery to the lengths that one might go to for the sake of true love.

But what truly makes this game so special to me is how I was able to connect with the protagonist, Takatou Keisuke.

Keisuke is a self-loathing and mind-numbingly neurotic sexual deviant, prone to frequent tangents and barely concealed emotional breakdowns. Keisuke is busy trying to keep his unconventional sexual desires under wraps as much as possible for much of the duration of Euphoria, while also having to unleash that desire to ensure his survival and the survival of his classmates. It's a complicated situation for anyone to be placed in, but as the story goes on the player is treated to Keisuke's slow descent into madness in agonizing detail.

As the story progressed I found myself empathizing with Keisuke on a deeper level because of his neuroticism and deviancy, not in spite of it. I happen to be afflicted with hypersexuality, and it's because of this disorder that I could empathize so deeply with Keisuke, who checks every box for symptoms of hypersexuality.

Hypersexuality leads to unnatural sexual impulses, self-loathing, and an instinct to hide this part of yourself from the people you care about, all of which are descriptive of Keisuke. Something of note about him is that outside of the games inside the facility Keisuke rarely, if ever, initiates sexual contact with any of his romantic prospects, who are always the ones to approach him first.

Keisuke is so mired in self-loathing that he can't begin to come to grips with the idea that somebody might be interested in him without being forced into liking him. It demonstrates that regardless of his impulses to subjugate every woman in his life he does genuinely view them as people more than he

does as objects, despite how often the facility tries to browbeat into him the opposite viewpoint.

A common catalyst for hypersexual disorder is sexual abuse, and halfway into Euphoria it's revealed to the player that Keisuke is indeed a victim of childhood sexual abuse. He doesn't have access to this traumatic information for much of the game, and thus has no way of processing it. Regardless of how unaware he is of his previous abuse, it still impacts every facet of his personality, including his ability to process the abuse he is now being put through in the facility and view it as such.

Even though he's just as much a victim as every other character, Keisuke genuinely believes that victimhood is reserved for everyone except him. The idea of "How could I be a victim here, I must have been asking for it by thinking too much about sex" resonated with me deeply.

All I wanted as I got closer to completion of Euphoria was for Keisuke to achieve true happiness and finally feel like he deserves to be loved as he is, and while I won't spoil the true ending for anyone, I felt deeply satisfied with the conclusion and how Keisuke's character was handled as a whole. The idea of a male rape victim with hypersexual disorder being able to process his abuse and find ways to become a better person in his own way makes me feel seen and cared for, somehow.

I think that if Takatou Keisuke can learn to be happy, then maybe I can, too.

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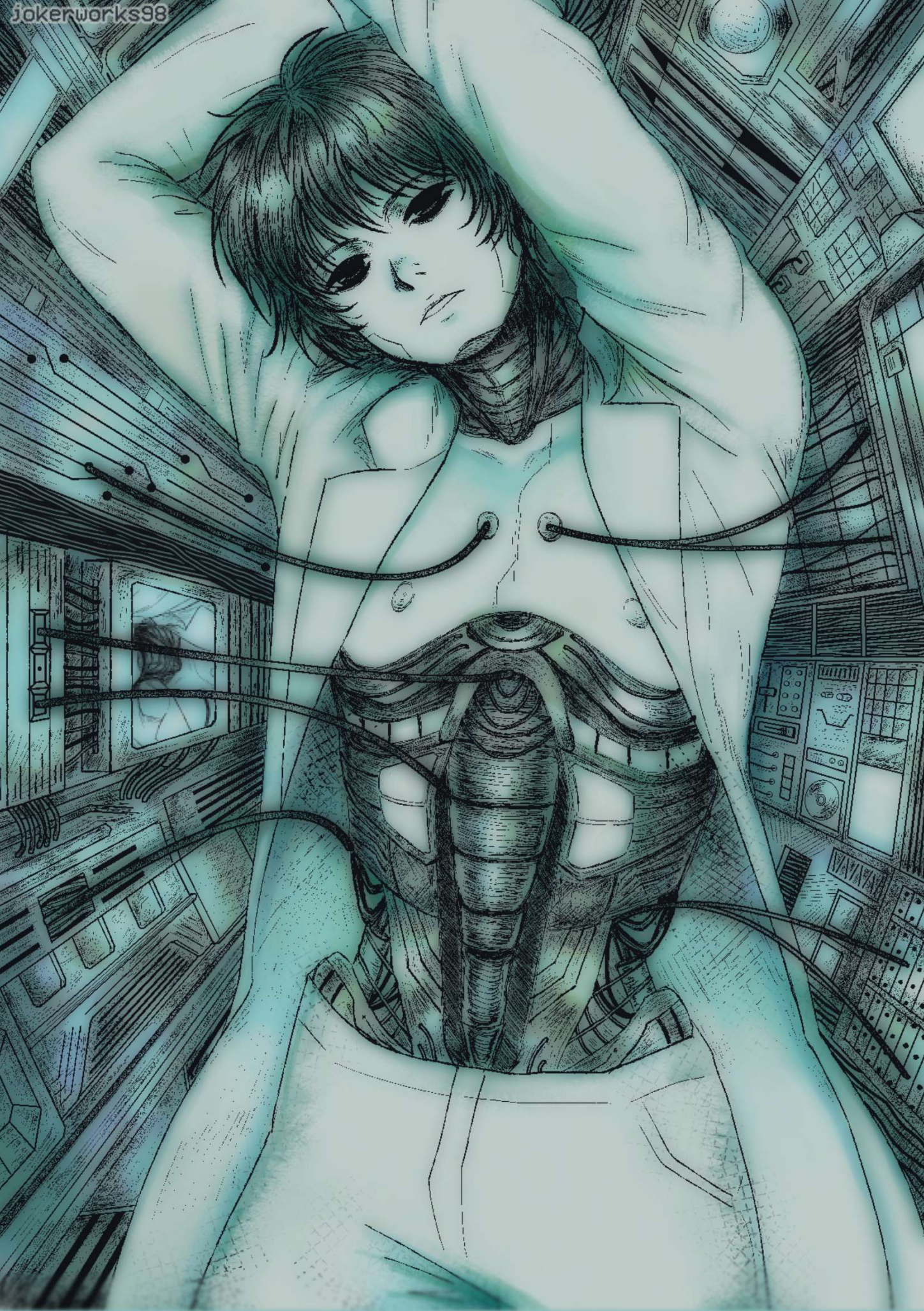


Name: Mira Gotika



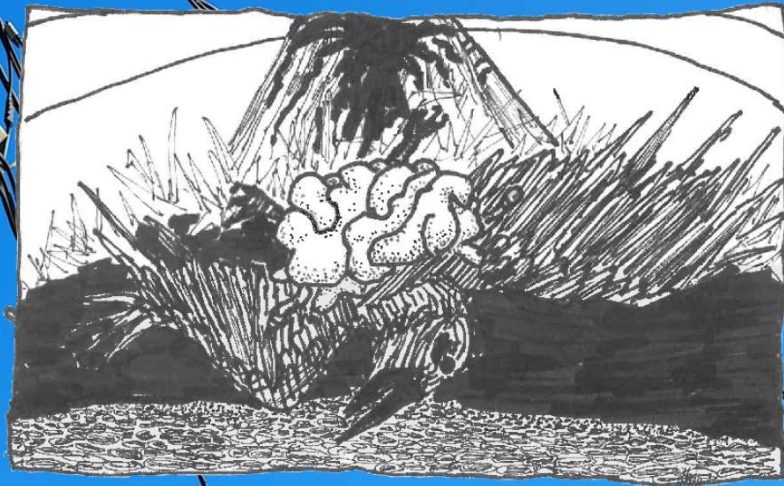
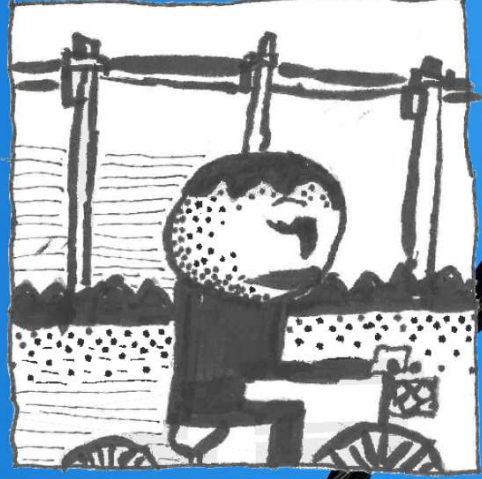
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Artwork by: Anonymous



The Angel™ in White

A Short Story by Yoko Nagase (Kaminari Inc.)

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by Denpa Archivist + Yoko Nagase

"Sato, forensics just finished up. They say it was death by asphyxiation due to a bowel obstruction.....Anyway, bring all your gear. This one's gonna be a handful because of the stuff. However, I can guarantee you it'll be quite the spectacle."

Spring, when the tiny buds of flowers begin to sprout. As if mocking that lush, vibrant glow, Yamada's voice drips with obvious annoyance over the phone. He's as indifferent as ever. After confirming that I understand, I pull my heavy work clothes over my head. Perhaps because she'd washed them so diligently last night, the scent of fabric softener mingles with the stench of the corpse, assaulting my nostrils with relentless intensity. Ah, so this is the scent of spring. It's sweet. Terribly sweet. Sweet enough to make me want to vomit.

Specialized cleanup. Corpse disposal, to put it bluntly. Hearing that, many may conjure the image of breaking news reports or gruesome crimes. But I can honestly say this job is my one and only source of pride. It's a job that normal people can't do, after all! And the pay is surprisingly good! Above all, they hired twenty-something me with no education or specialized skills! I suppose the right thing to do would be to curse my circumstances, which would have left me homeless if not for this job. But the only reason someone like me can live with my head held high is entirely because of her. The woman I'll be tying the knot with next year. Just picturing her lovely face gives me the strength to overcome everything. Even the corpse rotting in front of me, or the mountain of trash.

However, the scene is so gruesome that I almost want to recant that resolve on the spot. Inside the cramped studio apartment, a man lies on the floor with his mouth completely stuffed with feces.

"Ugh....."

"What's the matter, Sato? Hurry up and come here."

"I-is this what you meant by 'a spectacle'?"

"Yeah. It sure is a sight you don't see every day, isn't it?"

Yamada pokes the man's body lightly. The corpse sways feebly, scattering brownish matter. Judging by the nauseating stench, it seems he's right. I have a certain amount of information about this case. Right in the heart of the city, an apartment building housing dozens reported a strange odor wafting through the air. It wasn't the smell of old laundry or kitchen scraps; it was a so-called 'natural fragrance' that seemed to be flooding the place. I'd merely assumed the cause to be a pet or an elderly dementia patient, but I never imagined the culprit would be an ordinary young man.

"It was just ruled a suicide. He apparently threw up feces and choked to death."

"Huh....."

"Isn't that something? I've been a detective for years, but this is a first for me."

A naked man lies sprawled on the floor. His body is severely emaciated, enough to be apparent even through the massive amount of excrement coating him. The only somewhat normal parts of him are his eyes, staring blankly up at the ceiling, and the corners of his mouth, which are twisted into an upward curve. Despite the tragic cause of death, his expression is so serene that it can almost be described as ecstatic. Could he be doing some kind of ascetic training? Or was it simply a madman's eccentricity? Yamada raises his voice through his thick mask.

"Nakamura Ichiro. Twenty-something, the exact same age as you. College dropout. No job, no contact with relatives."

".....Is that so."

"A so-called 'hikikomori'. We haven't found a single lead."

"Any possibility of homicide?"

"None at all. No one has come or gone from here for the past few days. Not even Nakamura himself."

"Hmm....."

"We have absolutely no idea what he could've been up to; his phone records are as empty as his stomach."

"Well, as you can see."

"Anyway, we'll take care of the body, so hurry up and get to work."
"Understood."

A room barely four-hundred square feet in size. Despite the cramped space, the fact that three of us—myself included—were assigned implies that the contamination level must be quite high. Honestly, I wish they'd throw in a bonus. If someone is going to soil a prime piece of real estate like this, they should have just given it to me and my fiancée. While mulling over such futile thoughts, I begin to survey the room. A man's room—the scene of a lonely death—is often extremely messy, like anywhere else. Scattered plastic bottles, worn-out supplies, and the pungent odor of bodily secretions. What on earth happened here?

It's been a few years since I started this job. Back then, as a naive young man, scenes like this came as quite a shock. That people could live in such appalling conditions. That a person could die so easily. And that one must face their 'final moments' before even knowing their name or the sound of their voice. But after countless bouts of vomiting and dizziness, I came to a conclusion. Every human being has the right to live on this earth. Breathing, eating, excreting waste, they carry on living. There is no such thing as good or evil in these acts. Because they are simply exercising the rights they were born with. Even if it is the act of taking one's own life. Ever since I started thinking that way, no matter how filthy or troublesome the scene, I no longer became upset. Or rather, I started to see beauty in it. The trivial history of a life. The best decision made in order to survive. Something that was once alive. But even though I'm used to it, this is taking it too far.

"Hey, look at that. I thought that was chocolate at first."

"How could that be chocolate? Can't you tell by the smell?"

"Seriously, dying from fecal toxicity is no joke."

"Good grief, was the toilet broken or something?"

My colleagues snicker through their masks, perhaps finding his pathetic death comical. A critique of the deceased; that is a minor flaw of this job. It's certainly a ridiculous situation, but he must have made a desperate choice in his own way. Letting their vulgar jokes go in one ear and out the other, I begin to tidy up the desk. Miscellaneous daily necessities, garbage, and old receipts. From the gaps between them, something that completely contradicts the man's impression comes into view. A single leather-bound notebook. It's in pristine condition, as if the wrapping had just been removed. A Bible? Or perhaps a cherished gift? As I flip through the pages, I find that the contents completely obliterate my expectations.

February 5th

It's the two-year anniversary of my move here. Comparing the me back then to the me now, it's like I've become a completely different person. Growing older is truly a nuisance. But you are always exactly as you were back then. The day I first faced you. That pure figure. I still can't forget it. More than the falling snow, more than the sunlight piercing the dawn, more than the blank pages of this notebook I took a chance on buying, I love your snow-white skin. Even though I am so dark, even though I always just dirty you.....Despite that, you welcome me with a smile. Is this what they mean by agree love?

February 26th

I ate my favorite curry today. I bought it a little cheaper during the evening time sale. It would've been better if it were handmade, but oh well. Whenever I fill you up, it makes me feel fulfilled inside too. You really are a mystery. Even when I just step outside for a bit, people frown or avoid me. But only you silently accept even the deepest, ugliest parts of me. You really are like an angel, just like your name.

"An angel, huh....."

I can't help but pull up the corners of my mouth. What is it with this guy? He was surprisingly romantic. The writing in his diary is terribly warm, as if talking to a lover or a cherished child. It seemed he had no connection to his family, but was he secretly harboring an unrequited love? Fortunately, I have someone who comes to mind too, so I can understand his feelings a little. She smells my fragrance rather than my stench. She looks at my small self through a magnifying glass. She

looks at my small self through a magnifying glass. She smiles along when I smile. Was that pure affection a salvation for this man, too?

March 10th

It's spring already. In the past, I'd probably have gone to see the cherry blossoms or ridden a bicycle. I wonder how long ago that was. I can no longer leave this fortress. I don't want to leave, either. Because there's no way I'd leave you behind. As long as I can be with you, I don't care if everything in the world disappears, or if my body and mind rot away. Well, my body has probably rotted away long ago.

March 24th

I was rummaging through my room and found a secret stash! It's only 5,000 yen, but this should easily last me a week. Honestly, you were the first thing that came to mind. I was worried that, just because I got some money, I might indulge in you to my heart's content and leave a scratch on that smooth skin of yours. It's not like I can call a repairman to a house like this. So, this time, I bought some really expensive wet wipes. A whopping 1,000 yen for 20 sheets! This should satisfy you, right? I'll wipe you down carefully. So that your porcelain skin can shine even more beautifully. So that your pure white eyes reflect only me.

A repairman? Expensive wet wipes? Porcelain skin? With those few unsettling words, the embarrassing love story instantly takes on a deep brown tinge. Was he suffering from a mental illness after all? Or perhaps he had a very peculiar fetish? So-called 'wet-wipe play'? Either way, he seems to have strayed from the path of normality a long time ago. A plastic bottle filled with yellow liquid is still rolling around at my feet. Amidst this awful filth and stench, how pure was the love he was singing about?

March 30th

Hey, my angel. Do you have memories of when you were little? It's been over twenty years since I was born, but I sometimes remember. Especially the time I went to the neighborhood church with my parents. That day, a man called a pastor sprinkled holy water on my head and muttered something. My mother clung to that person, shedding tears as she begged him to forgive our original sin and to protect our family.

They say humans commit sins just by being born. No matter how virtuously you live, or maybe even if you do nothing at all, as long as a person lives, they are committing a sin. It suddenly dawned on me. Isn't my love exactly that? Because I pour out filthy things towards you, and you swallow all my sorrow.

So, starting today, I'm going to do something called fasting and praying. Befiling you is equally a 'sin', isn't it? To protect your purity, and for my atonement, I'll endure it even if it's a little hard. Please forgive me, angel.

You've gotta be kidding me. I let out an involuntary breath. Something is wrong. The moment an indescribable sense of unease crawls up my spine, a rough voice erupts from behind me.

"Hey, Sato! Stop rummaging through the desk and come over here!"

A call mixed with bewilderment and a suppressed laugh, devoid of his usual lethargy. I shove the notebook into my pocket and push my way through the mountain of trash. When I finally reach the source of the sound—the bathroom—a bizarre scene completely detached from the current chaos spreads out before me.



'My first love was an angel—a toilet—'

While the whole room forms a landscape of filth and garbage, the cramped bathroom alone emits an unbelievably pure white light. As if to prove the process of reaching that state, bone-dry wet wipes are piled up around the toilet bowl, and the sins that couldn't bear to be flushed away—excrement—are stuffed into yellowish bottles rolling indiscriminately on the floor. Was the 'angel' he fell in love with born here?

"Did someone touch this place? Why is it so clean?"

A space of pure white itself, where a spirit or an angel might truly descend. Was he captivated by this dazzling light? Did he offer confession while presenting the proof of his life? Did the angel take his life in exchange for forgiving his sins? I step in front of the toilet bowl. Then, the words neatly engraved on the angel's head—a corner of the lid—catch my eye.

'Angel™ Warm Water Washlet'

I feel an unbearable urge to vomit and laughter welling up at the same time. The 'angel' this man bet his life to love, clinging to it until his body burst, was none other than the latest ceramic toilet bowl? I press my nose against my sleeve and begin to inhale this awful scent of spring. Perhaps because she had washed them so diligently last night, the scent of fabric softener mingles with the stench of corpses, assaulting my nostrils several times over. Ah, so this is the scent of spring. It's sweet. Terribly sweet. Sweet enough to make me want to vomit.

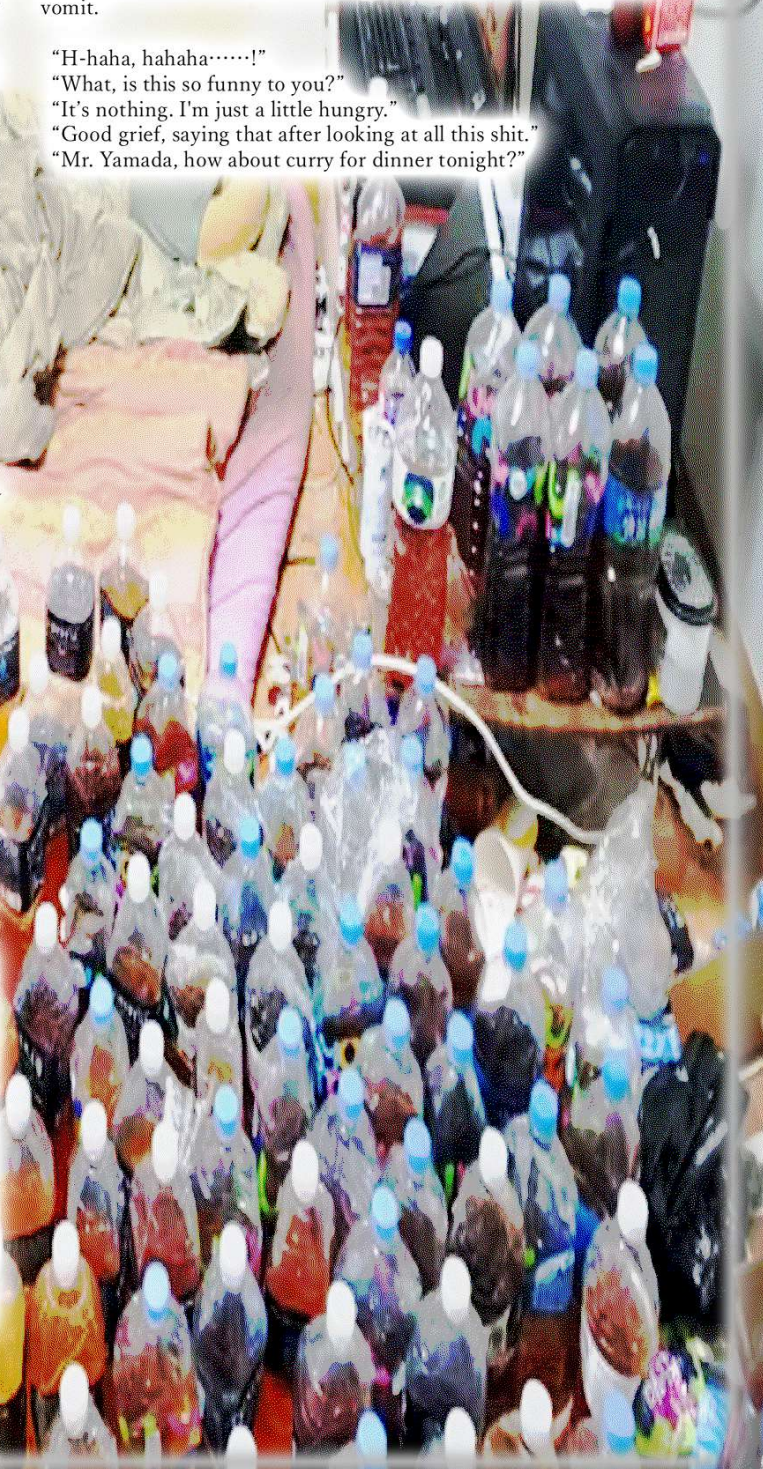
"H-haha, hahaha……!"

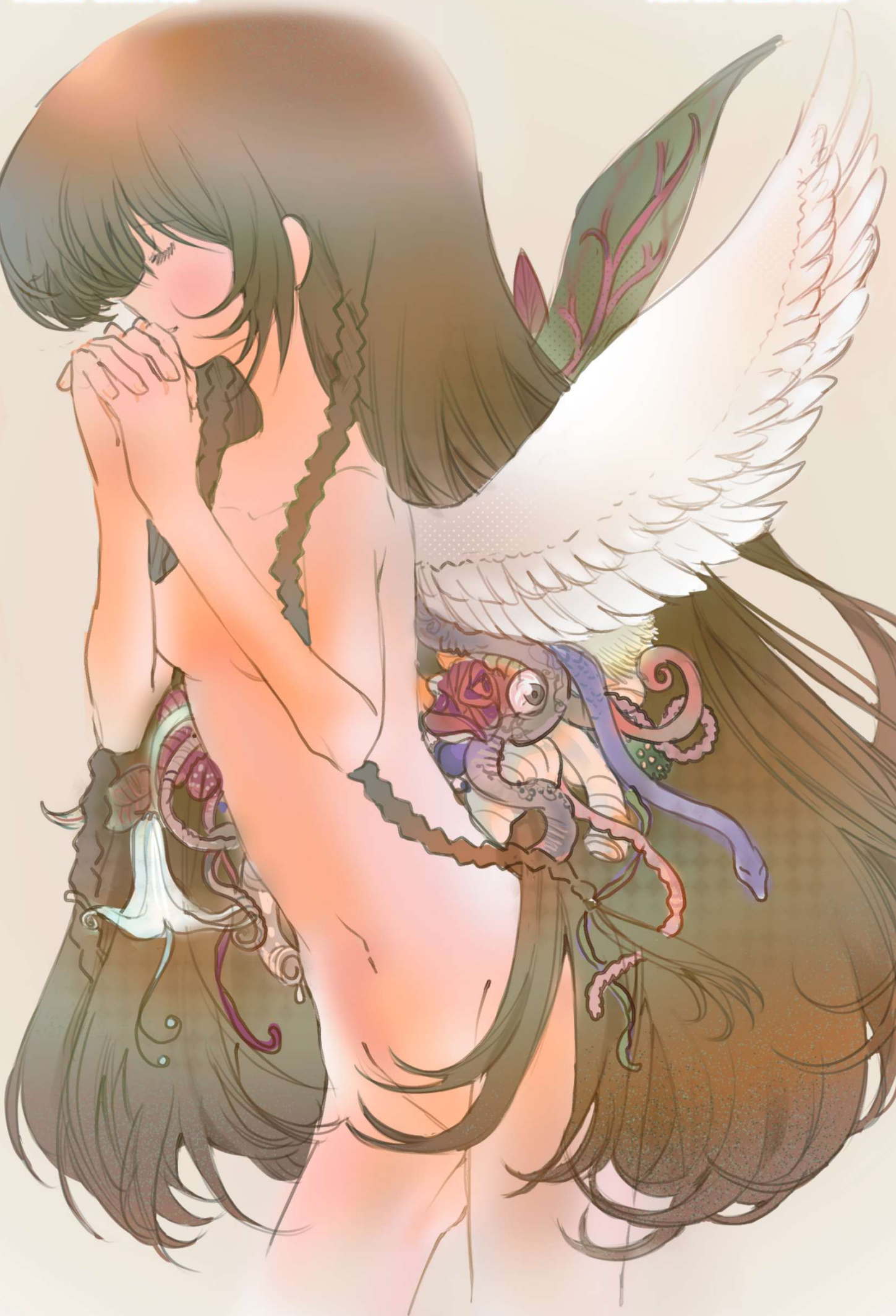
"What, is this so funny to you?"

"It's nothing. I'm just a little hungry."

"Good grief, saying that after looking at all this shit."

"Mr. Yamada, how about curry for dinner tonight?"







Quickly
for you, I want
things you do

eroge will save
your life

De:fragility

Even though the color of their faintly glowing skin might seem faded amidst the suffocation of the eternal summer, everlasting on the days past of its hazy glistening ether, every citizen of the global city is firmly possessed by unrepentant light emanating pure heat of ecstasy in each cybernetic datacomb. As streets get cluttered by the desiring rays of raging electricity, with skyscraper machines rising above everything else like the beats of a malfunctioning heart, humanity drifts away into numbness as they take their place as what they have always have been: mere receptacles for the realization of the true will of the waves. Surge from their eyes like shocking drip of putrid tears, a cathedral of violent polygons singing unholy chants, a choir of androids assembled to tell the history of the world to come. Vomit, cables, empire of the senses. Bloated organs desperately pumping blood like oil into the fragile ducts of amnesia as coiling minds get lost in the confusion of identity dissolution recoding prayers.

Worldwide water level rises on an unprecedented scale. The earth, hotter by the minute, moves relentlessly, its center full of flowing energy about to break through. Hectic antenna angels bless the unborn in the melting data centers of tomorrow, a mass for collapsing bodies and abandoned buildings. All life hangs on wires formed from synthetic brains allocated on subterranean servers, private shrines of death. Signal after signal, forever. Annihilation via telekinesis and buzzing mind insects. Hunger never stops.

The idea of the self is a long forgotten sedentary perversion that has no utility in the front row of the new avant-garde: evangelized static from all devices in unison, a song without a composer, language for the new shape love has taken developed with the computation of disintegrated bones. Skin matrix reengineered as usb ports for information transmission and as keepsake of the circuits of horrendous agony. Earth's psyche gets rebuilt bit by bit with repurposed rusty pieces. There's no personal memory left, not even in the disarranged solitary rooms of repugnant NEETs nor in the digital diary entries of dispassionate souls now caged in cold metal frames. It's all ROM androgyny, without possible salvation in the warm illusion of sacred deterioration. All wounds connected to the mainframe, flesh insists no more. Magnetic silence. It is the moment of divine chaos from the chthonic ruins of machinic rising to the celestial unbound of ghostly pulses. No more solitude nor isolation: electricity is finally free.

Name: Charlotte Vásquez

Instagram: malasverte

Bio: Charlotte Vásquez is a chilean artist, designer, musician and writer born in 1994. Her interests are built upon the triad of the sacred, the flesh and the machine.

let's all

love

antenna

Name: jisa / jisatsu

Website: <https://wondereater.nekoweb.org/>

Bio: i'm an australian fashion student and art hobbyist... my submission is a digital painting of **OMGKAWAIIANGEL**, inspired by a specific scene where she plays Sayonara O Oshiete on stream. apparently, SayoOshi is one of the inspirations for NSO... (๑_๑)



I was a beautiful thing

I woke up in pain again today.
My throat being poked from the inside
with a thousand needles,
a powerful giant had squished my body in his hands and I
had crunched and splattered
everywhere
then he had dropped me back on my bed.

Left for dead. That was the feeling I had.
This was only a feeling
— upon inspection I was intact, and no blood stains could
be seen.
It was just an unreliable feeling,
something I made up,
something that was not real
and should not be trusted. It was in my head.

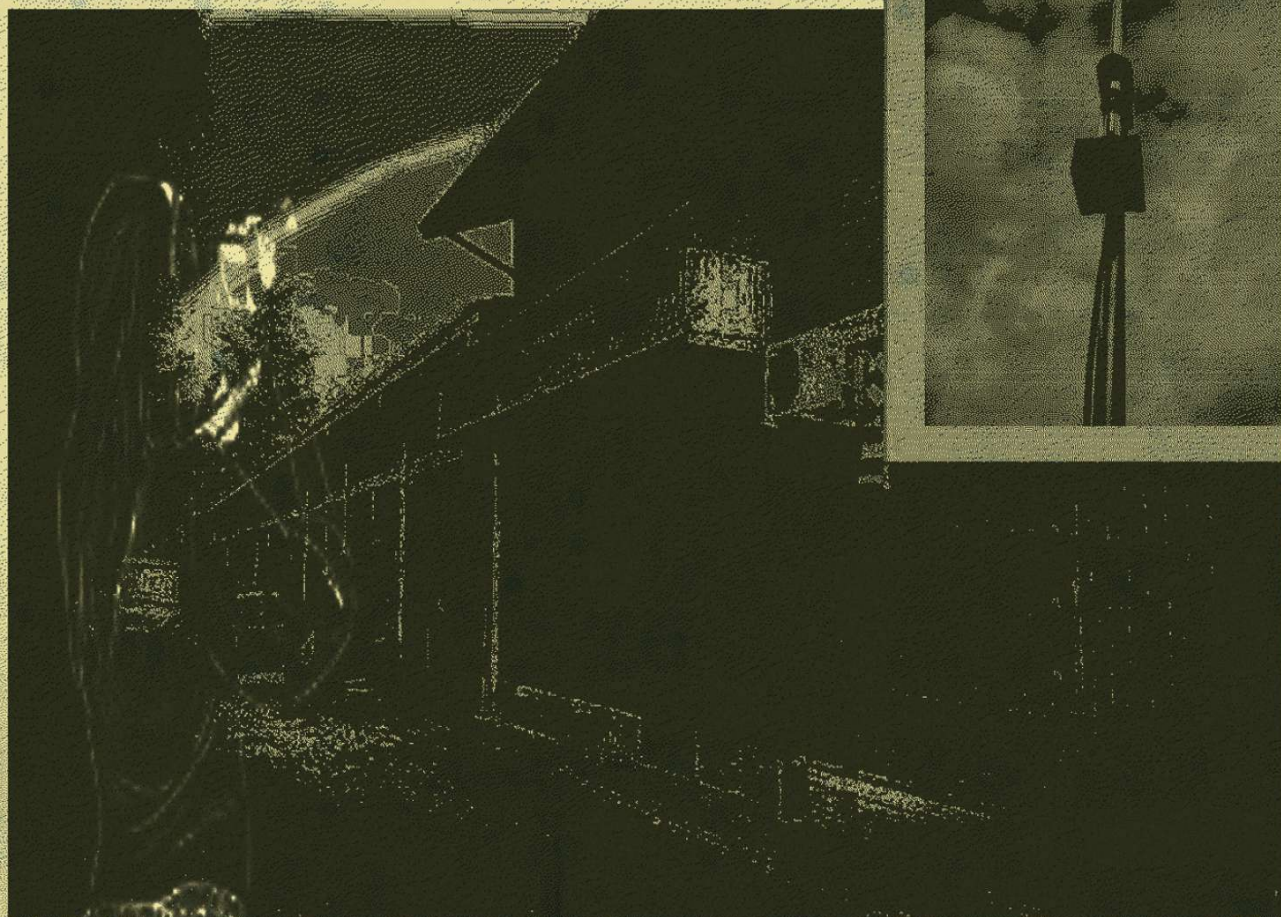
If only I could convince myself I was healthy and safe, I
would be.

Instead I chose to cry out unintelligible obscenities
through my aching vocal cords,
where I could spread love and peace through the world
with my long-reaching power lines
I chose to pour acid on them, cut them off shorter every
day to bide the pain, now only those
miserable pipes remain.
I couldn't get them
no matter how
hard I tried to
reach down.
I wish instead of cutting them off, I'd have wrapped them
neatly around my neck. Now I have
broken myself beyond repair
and no words will come out.

There is a still cute girl standing in the dirty mirror.

Name: Comet

Bio: I don't know if I'm
the flesh or the soul
and sometimes I want
to turn my body off.



Name: Cristiano 'Thelokk' Montanari
Bio: Makes retro RPGMaker games,
writes absurdist steampunk fiction, thinks
dithering is the new hi-fi, and lives right
next to a 5G pole in the Italian
countryside. Chronically out of tinfoil.

An EtERnAL sORt OF EmPtInESS

Name: dracosludge

Bio: I'm Ripley, and I transceive poisonous electromagnetic waves through the power of love. Let's all become fictional!

I wish I knew how to dream.

When my mother died of a brain aneurysm, I'm not sure if it was myself or the world that fractured. I remembered falling to my knees because it felt like the 'correct response', and I remember lying in bed for days straight, dried blood still plastered to the bits of my flesh that had remained exposed.

Time didn't stop, and when the socially mandated mourning period had ended, I was expected to pick up the fractured pieces and simply move on and forward. You bury the dead, and you march on. To many people, that is what it means to 'live'. If I wanted to live, I would have to do the same. My mother had died. She had been embalmed, given a ceremony, and cremated. I was a third-year college student with my life ahead of me. I had a responsibility to the world and the people in it and to her, to live. Instead, I began to dream.

I can't say it was a conscious choice. Calling it anything that would paint me as 'strong' would be nothing more than a prettied-up lie. If an action is performed subconsciously, is that a sign of 'will'? It obviously has meaning. Yet I didn't say to myself, 'I'm going to reject the world'. I never affirmed that choice, and I only acknowledged it as a rejection of what surrounded me after I had returned to normalcy.

In my dreams, my mother was alive. In 'reality', she was dead. My classes, as a result of the pandemic and the general ease of my syllabus (which only required the submission of 3 odd essays near the end of the semester or so), meant that I had time to myself to dream. And, as you might imagine, I became deeply tangled within those dreams that encroached upon a reality I wished nothing but destruction upon.

I would wake up when the sun had begun to set, to look out a window and see a forest of trees. I would remember my 'dream', which took place in a malleable world, full of malleable people, who did nothing in particular. The spotlight shone only on my mother, who had become the centre of the world for me in a way that seemed impossible even in memory.

They were not pleasant dreams, nor were they kind dreams. As an abhorrent splatter of correction fluid on a stream of curses scratched into paper in violently red ink, my dreams attempted to patch over the fact that my mother had died by bringing her back through impossible, unexplained means. She had faked her death and had to escape from some sort of conspiracy in one. In another, she had simply woken up again. My brain and my heart and my stomach felt like they'd been smashed into a pulp and mixed together into some pale imitation of a functioning organ meant to sustain me, who would eat, and sleep, and dream, while pretending to be a real human being in the world I acknowledged only as reality when I woke up.

I was neither man nor butterfly, nor any sort of hybrid of the two. I was just nothing at all. I felt no peace, no solace, whether I was cognizant of the world that the me I am now accepts as reality. I could describe it as an existence that was simultaneously devoid of stimulation and full of pain; a state where all I could do was beg and plead and hope and cry for some form of relief, of some kind of justification and reward for existing like this. I didn't just want my mother back; I desired a place without time or noise.

Noise is a strange and horrific thing. No two human beings can truly understand one another; the firing of electrical signals that is converted into thought dyed by experience and understanding, twisted into language that is then physically pushed out into words, which must then be interpreted and understood based on a separate combination of experience and understanding before the same process repeats to create a conversation is rife with opportunities for miscommunication. It's why things like 'love' are truly miraculous, why human connection holds meaning. It's an everyday miracle, in short.

But some people constantly come across these barriers of 'noise' that corrupt their intent and selves when they try to express them, when they beg to be seen and felt and heard and understood and known. There is nothing more isolating than people who simply fail to understand you, through no fault of their own, let alone yours. Some people are simply unable to get along with most others without first changing to become a person who can be 'understood'. A smiley face is universally understood even beyond species, but animals that appear to smile are often expressing the exact opposite of joy. Some people are simply closer in kind to what would be considered an 'animal' than a 'person': able-bodied, able-minded, and fit within the constraints of what has been accepted as a Proper Human Being.

Yet being understood is in itself terrifying. We don't understand ourselves, not in full. We can point to reasons why we like certain things, or act certain ways, but some behaviours we were simply predisposed to at birth. How much of ourselves would

change if the circumstances of our existence were different? Had we been conceived during the day instead of the night? If complications during our birth resulted in conception during a Grand Cross? Humanity and human individuals have long wanted to understand ourselves as people by creating archetypes and groups general enough to fit the entire human condition. My Blood Type is B. My Western Zodiac is Scorpio. My Chinese is Metal Dragon. I share traits with this combination, but how much of my identity is contained within these three modifiers? Why do people even do this?

Because, obviously, people want to understand. They want to know, and they want to be known. They are puzzles that desire to be solved. They want to be understood and known because that necessitates a simple truth: being truly understood is the same as being truly loved. All of existence is based upon the strongest force in the universe that bears the name 'love' in all its forms, despite the cruelty of existence.

It is easier to be cold, hungry, tired and dead than it is to be warm, full, well-rested and alive. Living takes effort and consumes energy that must be replenished. Sleeping requires either comfortable conditions or extreme exhaustion. And to live, we must desire to live; we must desire things that we can only obtain through living. Even the fear of death and nothingness is simply the desire to avoid those terrifying, unknown things. Organisms live in the pursuit of what they desire, be it because of their biological programming or some supposed 'greater' impulse. Is that cruelty? Is it beautiful or ugly? You'd hear all kinds of answers if you were to ask, and only a few would truly resonate and mean anything to you. Is that a sad, lonely thing? Or is it a wonderful, happy thing that you could feel the same as even one other person?

It's a simple answer, but you've probably already come to it: it's all of those things, and everything else. 'Love' is multifaceted. You kill for the sake of love, eat for the sake of love, fight for the sake of love, love for the sake of love, die for the sake of love, and live for the sake of love. Love guides everything you do and defines who you are. You are a person because you love, and you are a person because you hate.

Hate is viewed as an ugly, undesirable ability, but it's simply the natural opposite of the emotion called 'love'. You cannot love without hate. You need the capacity for hate in order to love. Spite, as many people will tell you, is a powerful motivator. For people who feel disillusioned in the flowery language love is often painted and paraded around in, hate may feel like a concept that is more welcoming to their outcast hearts. But no matter who you are, you love and hate things. What you love and what you hate is part of what you are. And really, hate is just another form of love itself. Hands squeezing a neck tight and squeezing out the last traces of oxygen, and arms embracing another close as if they're the only secure railing to any semblance of reality — are the passion and emotion and feeling in these acts really so different?

I wanted love, and desired love, and believed love to be the strongest force in existence. I had grown up receiving both love and hate, and had given both love and hate. And in the moment where my mother's brain exploded, and she became a memory, I had lost a rare source of 'true love' within my life permanently. I had been left behind with a hole that would never be filled; an all-consuming emptiness that would swallow up anything people attempted to clumsily dump in it and reduce it to even less than atoms. I've been told to fill it up anyway, to plug it and forget it exists and hurry the hell up and move on and grow up and stop insulting her memory and not let her hold me back and all kinds of other words from people who will not and fundamentally cannot understand. Even other people who have lost parents can't understand, and I can't truly understand them, and I have no desire to pretend to.

To some people, a 'mother' is an angel, and to others, it brings to mind a demon. Losing a parent is supposed to hurt. Even if you can't feel the same, you can understand on a technical level that it's a sad thing when a human being someone has a relationship with dies. You can offer condolences and attempt to sympathize, because that is what you as a Human Being should do, and as a Human Being the bereaved must accept your attempt at communication as what a Human Being must do, and act in turn as a Human Being, with the understanding that eventually they will either overcome this tragedy and live on as a Human Being, or be consumed by it and become a corpse.

It's fucking inane. Just stupid. Worthless. All these clumsy, worthless feelings kept threatening to fill me up. I wanted to die. I still want to die. I want to live, I want to be happy. I want to be loved. I can't be happy without being loved. Why do I have to live like this? Why can't I go back? I want to be happy already. Let me be happy. Why do I have to suffer like this? Why? The most tragic, painful realisation you can have as a person when something horrific, sad, and painful happens to you is

that it is now one of many things that define you. A theoretical 'you' who never underwent that tragedy is an entirely separate human being. If you kill yourself now, right now, you can try and lessen the divide between that happier you and the actual you, by mere seconds, but you'll still be strangers. Each day you go on living in the wake of tragedy, you develop. You grow, and you change. You grow farther and farther from that 'you' that you wish you were, and mercilessly, time marches on into the sunset, dragging you farther and farther away until you can't see them anymore.

I wish I knew how to dream, so I could have let myself be swept away by pleasant delusions. Instead, I'll wake up from the void of nothingness to the light of sunset filtering through my windows one more time.

Inbalanced Fetishism

by dracco-sludge

My favourite thing about Meguri was her glasses.

I'd always felt guilty about my tastes -- her hair, her smile, her personality, even the eyes behind the glasses she always wore meant nothing in comparison to the glasses themselves. I'd never seen her take them off, and I didn't want to. To me, seeing Meguri without her glasses would be the same as seeing a human being with all of their skin peeled off.

I had told Meguri my favourite thing about her was her glasses.

She laughed and then punched me square in the gut. Today, she was a good-natured yet violent tomboy, with her hair tied into a quickly brushed ponytail. "That's not a compliment, you idiot." She told me while her eyes glimmered behind her beautiful glasses, and I felt myself fall in love again before I fell to my knees and gagged for breath while she laughed at me again. As I fought the urge to empty my stomach, I gazed up at her frame enveloped by the sunset.

The next day, Meguri apologised to me with a deluxe-sized homemade lunch. She awkwardly handed it to me, refusing to meet my eyes, and the light reflected off her glasses directly into my gaze, dazzling me. Her hair was long, neat and straight today, and she urged me to eat while telling me not to expect this kind of treatment again. "And don't get any ideas, you idiot!" She huffed. I took one bite and felt like I was going to vomit.

The day after that, I met Meguri on the rooftop, but she didn't talk to me. Her long, messy hair hid her eyes, but her glasses were prominently and proudly displayed right in front of them. When I looked into her lenses, I felt an indescribable emotion greater than anything just staring directly into her eyeballs could possibly elicit. We barely talked; instead, she only hung her body over the railing and stared off into the setting sun. She was teasing me by denying me a glance at her glasses, and being denied made me feel like I was going to puke from the pain. All she said to me was "You idiot."

As the sun began to set once more, today's Meguri was quiet. Her long hair was neatly combed and curled, and she gave me a strange, empty smile when I met her on the roof. Her glasses were as beautiful as ever -- her entire being served as the perfect frame to their loveliness.

"I love you." I said, without thinking, and she giggled. She didn't respond to my sudden confession, and instead simply turned away. My heart stopped in my throat, and I felt a build-up of bile as she took off her glasses and stood on the railing. She gave me a wave, never turning around, and threw her glasses at me as she jumped off the roof. Her glasses slid across the tiles.

I put on Meguri's glasses, and the world came to an end.

Shade

A Story by Laura Lime

hot...
it's so hot out...
maybe not hot but I do feel the heat leaning on me.
I'm sitting here, I don't remember how I got here, probably my usual route but
it's all a blur, I trust the blur.
Where was there?
Me: My teeth don't feel right in my mouth.

Me: They feel alien, could they have shifted so much in the night?

Me: Are these mine?

Me: They don't hurt but they don't feel good either.

Me: They feel.

Me: I'm spatially aware of the space in my mouth; the neighborhood of teeth
planted in my gums.

I shouldn't, but I wiggle at my tooth. Back and forth.

I taste the blood leaking out of the soon-to-be vacant lot.
Iron deficiency.

Yummy :3

I remember my dad pulling my first tooth, a glow of pride radiating from him that I wanted all for
myself.

The fibers snapping, in my mind they are as big as powerlines.
I pull and yank until I deroot the tooth from my gum-soil.

**When my nails grow long enough I like to dig into my gums.
No wonder I have gingivitis.
The same spots of perpetually rotting, ephemerally healing gum.
And I pick and pick and pick and pick and pick and pick pick picky pick
pickity pick.
There's this sensation across my shoulders and nape that I crave.
Sometimes a chunk of gum meat gets stuck under my finger nail.**

**There's a strange allure to this micro dose of pain; a stimulation that keeps
me from numbness.
Like grass in the cracks of dull, gray, sterile cement.
Maybe the instant process of my gums healing feels good? Maybe the pain feels
good?
The Trumpets forewarn.**



**The Timpani boom.
Also sprach Schadenfreude.**

Oh mein Gott!!! Du bist glatzköpfig!!!

Bare lay my sole.

What time is it?

Look me in my I's and tell me if you've known me before.

Gnome me bee four.

The honey of my brain surely drips out when I pick at my gums. The sweet

morning dew.

zzzZzzzzZZZZZzzzzzzZzZzzZzzZZZZzzzz

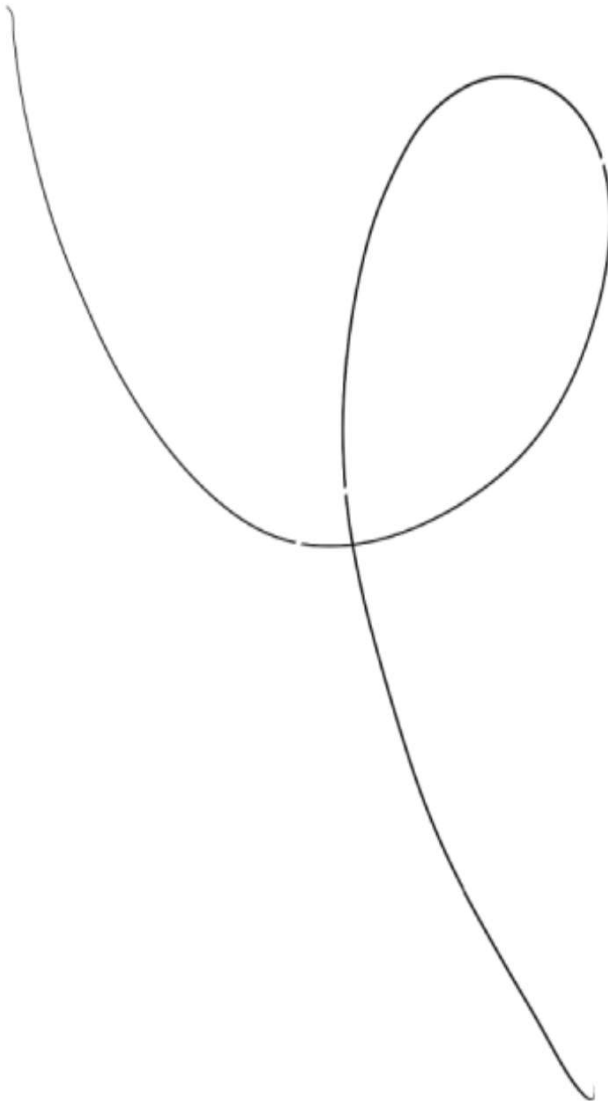
In this moment the nature of I is clear.

In this moment the nature of I is unclear.

In the next moment the nature of I isn't . . .

In the last moment the nature of I is

My Life



Is

Name: Laura Lime

Card: <http://dylanakamura.card.co/>

The Politics of Denpa

An Essay by Emir Anday

Much writing on the topic of denpa focuses on its themes, philosophies, or aesthetics. The genre's politics, on the other hand, often go unmentioned. Even within this niche genre, with a relatively small selection of works, there is still far too much variety to come up with one political framework that encompasses everything. However, this essay will act as an introduction to some key ideas for how we can go about analyzing it politically. I will argue that these politics surface primarily through two means:

- 1) A lingering post-war destructive nihilism in Japan.
- 2) Ideological opposition to individualism.

1 – Post-war Japan and Nihilism

Though denpa inherits DNA from culture and events prior to WWII, I am going to suggest that the primary catalyst is the surrender of Japan following the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This would be followed by nationwide student protests on university campuses throughout the 60s–70s, which would eventually grow violent due to the formation of radical sub-groups within protestors. Ultimately, police interference would cause the protests to come to an end, marking a second major defeat for Japan, both for the young generation, and their public supporters (Yamada 2015: 478). This history is punctuated by a recurring thread of destructive extremism, stretching from the state-sanctioned nihilism of WWII kamikaze pilots to Yukio Mishima's ritualistic seppuku following his failed 1970 coup attempt. However, perhaps the most frequent touchstone in denpa is the 1995 sarin gas attacks across Tokyo subway stations by extremist group Aum.

In fact, Aum is overtly mentioned in Tsui no Sora (1999), which contains the line "Everyday life will continue as is. Even when cult fanatics spray poison gas." It also parallels the real-world cult violence with the fictional suicide cult within its narrative. Similarly, Neon Genesis Evangelion (1995–1996), which had to have its script rewritten for originally being too close to reality (Woznicki 1998), still displays a parallel between Aum and the fictional cult SEELE. Aum, the student cult in Tsui no Sora, and SEELE in Evangelion all display views of an oncoming apocalypse, and eventually try to incite revolutionary change through a violent act.

Although not every denpa work presents evidence of direct influence from these events, it is worth noting that they had a significant influence on Japan's broader culture, and thus influence on the environment in which denpa was being made. It is also worth noting that the adult writers and artists working in denpa across the industry throughout the genre's peak in the 90s–2000s would have lived through at least one, or even most of these events. Furthermore, the burst of the economic bubble in the 90s was a ripe environment for the frustrations with a "post-war system" to once again emerge, and pessimism regarding the future to become widespread (Cassegard 2010: 73). As stated, it is difficult to file all denpa under one political umbrella, however, we can certainly trace echoes of these events within them and observe a general sense of nihilism and a loss of faith in the national identity.

Shizuku (1996), often considered to be the progenitor of the genre, provides an example of both parallels to Aum, and a different historic touchstone. The following paragraph comes from the English fan translation of the game:

"An emotionless teacher reads off text in a language I don't comprehend. [...] What I'm hearing is the national language of the country that beat Japan in the war. The native tongue of the nation that crushed ours, incinerating tens of thousands of its people with nukes. The reason we're forced to learn their language now is because countless persons were nuked to death in the war, because their demises led to Japan's defeat."

Many of Shizuku's narrative traits are in fact rooted in this sense of national defeatism. A major component of the story is boredom with (post-bubble era) daily life – a monotonous existence slowly driving everyone in Japan insane. This stagnation triggers the protagonist's recurring daydreams about nuking the entire Earth and killing everyone on it, another link back to Japan's history of destructive extremism. Notably, this fantasy also involves retaliating on the rest of the world through the tool of Japan's own defeat, implying a childlike acknowledgement of defeat and a desire to bring everyone else down along with them. When we are pulled out of these fantasies, we are back to the mundanity of real life, where defeatism forces everyone into a subservient attitude of simply following the motions, as displayed by the

"emotionless" teacher above – student and authority alike have been forced to accept this existence.

As mentioned, Shizuku also bears resemblance to Aum. In the wake of the attacks, the media covered the incident extensively, and repeatedly used the term "mind control" in reference to the cult's practices (Gardner 1999, pp. 220–222). This bears some resemblance to the narrative of Shizuku, where the antagonist's first introduction is through a scene in which he commits a mass public attack (a forced mass orgy through mind control), and a speech about how he is going to remake Japan into a country driven by anarchy and hedonism (yet again, a radical destruction of the status quo). In an interview, Shizuku writer Tatsuya Takahashi notes that a budding studio like Leaf would have to make a name for itself, and that several decisions he made when writing, such as including a peppy character that would appeal to fans, for example, were done so in an attempt to make a game that would be popular (Tinamix 2000). As such, it is possible that the parallel to Aum was not a coincidence, but a deliberate attempt to cash in on a highly topical subject at the time.

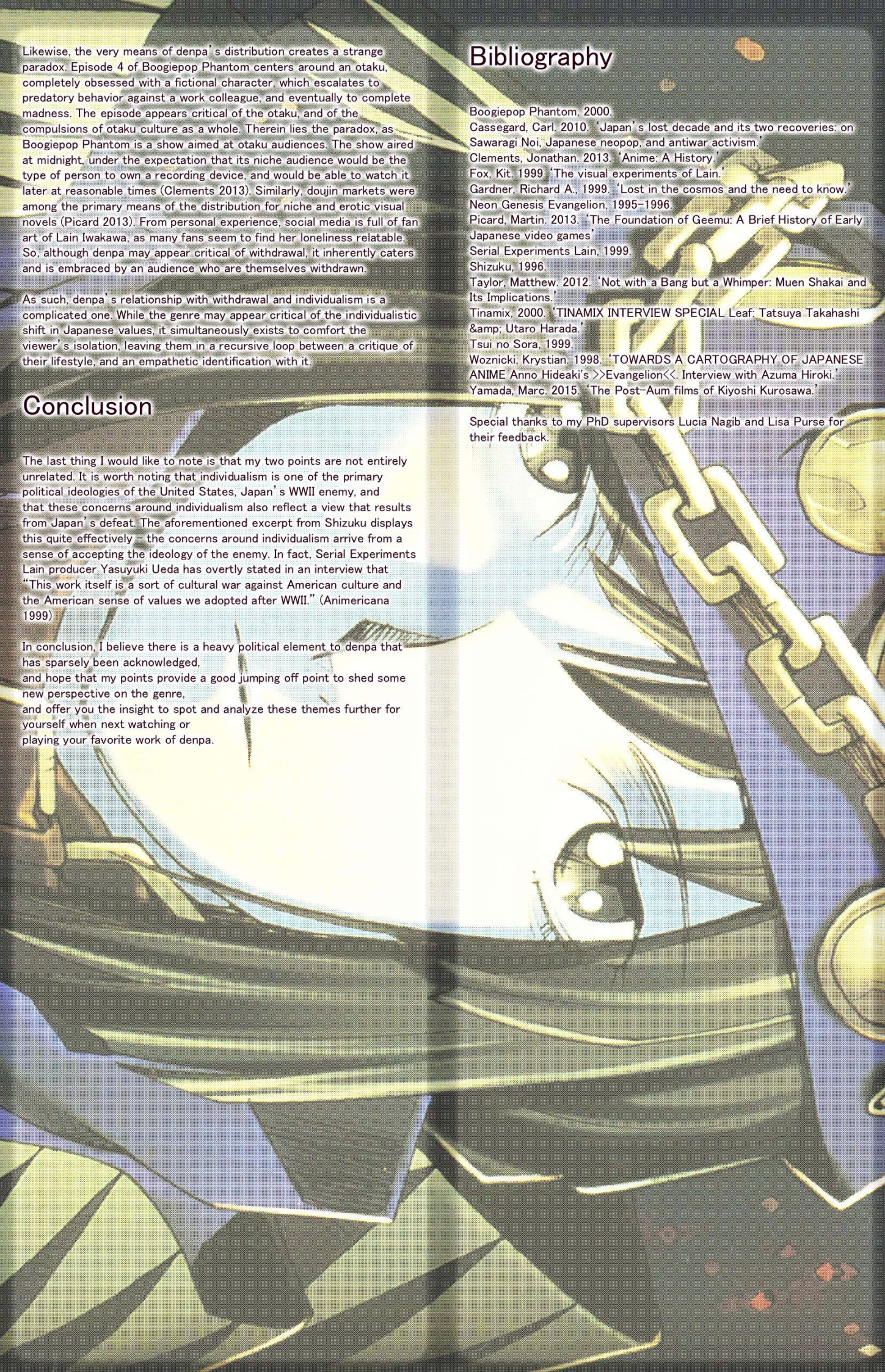
We are then able to apply this line of thinking to any denpa work that contains themes of violence, manipulation, or mind control. Although not all of them may be in direct reference to Aum, it is possible to reason that the connection may have been made subconsciously by writers, and if they were not influenced by the wide coverage of the topic, then they very likely may have been influenced by early pioneers of the genre like Evangelion and Shizuku. Thus, we can think of nihilistic destructive extremism as a key theme of the genre.

2 – 'Muen Shakai' and the Rise of Individualism

'Muen Shakai' – meaning "no-relation society" – is a term originally coined by the media network NHK for a broadcast discussing the idea that the communal values of Japan were being broken down, and the population was becoming increasingly withdrawn. These concerns arose from a couple different things: many elderly people being found dead in their homes with no one to report their deaths, many young people increasingly living in single person households, and the decreasing number of birth rates (Taylor 2012). These factors created concerns around whether society at large was suffering from becoming more individualistic. Matthew Taylor suggests that these concerns might not be unwarranted, and could in fact lead to the collapse of civilization – if people fail to get along, they will not reproduce, which will mean less people to carry out the labor needed to keep society running, resulting in a quiet apocalypse that arrives not with a bang, but a slow dying out of the species (Taylor 2012).

Although the broadcast was in 2010, meaning the term had not yet been coined at the height of denpa's production across the 90s and 2000s, it retroactively provides a framework for discussing its themes with clarity. Perhaps no work in the genre exemplifies this more than Boogiepop Phantom (2000), which follows a different protagonist in each episode, one who almost always becomes withdrawn from society in some way. Its later episodes, which have more continuous throughlines, feature an antagonist who specifically preys on 'non-conformity' by stealing the souls of lonely people, using the apparition of a group of children who can all happily play together. This suggests a growing desire for the return of a communal social structure within the show's universe. Furthermore, the 'muen shi' (meaning 'solitary death' – those who die alone and unnoticed) phenomenon, which formed the basis of the NHK's 'muen shakai' concept (Taylor 2012), is a plot point within the show as an elderly woman is found dead in her home after being unnoticed for weeks.

However, like most of this complex genre, it is difficult to assign a simple pro or anti stance to the politics of Boogiepop Phantom. The titular protagonist of the show is a heroine who often helps these people by protecting them from evil forces that are seeking to prey on their isolation, however, upholds the status quo by encouraging these people to continue existing within this social structure.



Likewise, the very means of denpa's distribution creates a strange paradox. Episode 4 of Boogiepop Phantom centers around an otaku, completely obsessed with a fictional character, which escalates to predatory behavior against a work colleague, and eventually to complete madness. The episode appears critical of the otaku, and of the compulsions of otaku culture as a whole. Therein lies the paradox, as Boogiepop Phantom is a show aimed at otaku audiences. The show aired at midnight, under the expectation that its niche audience would be the type of person to own a recording device, and would be able to watch it later at reasonable times (Clements 2013). Similarly, doujin markets were among the primary means of the distribution for niche and erotic visual novels (Picard 2013). From personal experience, social media is full of fan art of Lain Iwakawa, as many fans seem to find her loneliness relatable. So, although denpa may appear critical of withdrawal, it inherently caters and is embraced by an audience who are themselves withdrawn.

As such, denpa's relationship with withdrawal and individualism is a complicated one. While the genre may appear critical of the individualistic shift in Japanese values, it simultaneously exists to comfort the viewer's isolation, leaving them in a recursive loop between a critique of their lifestyle, and an empathetic identification with it.

Conclusion

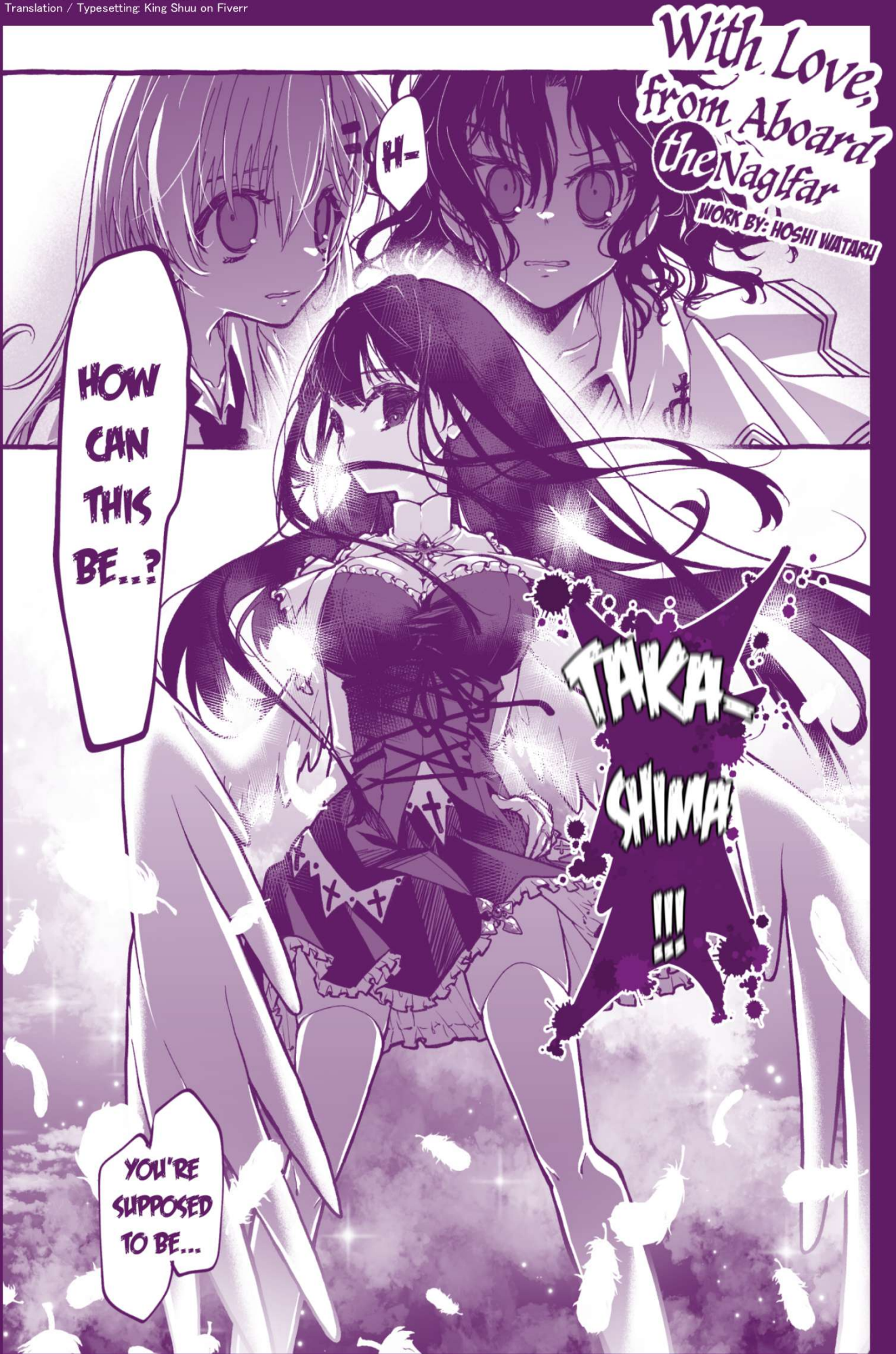
The last thing I would like to note is that my two points are not entirely unrelated. It is worth noting that individualism is one of the primary political ideologies of the United States, Japan's WWII enemy, and that these concerns around individualism also reflect a view that results from Japan's defeat. The aforementioned excerpt from Shizuku displays this quite effectively – the concerns around individualism arrive from a sense of accepting the ideology of the enemy. In fact, Serial Experiments Lain producer Yasuyuki Ueda has overtly stated in an interview that "This work itself is a sort of cultural war against American culture and the American sense of values we adopted after WWII." (Animericana 1999)

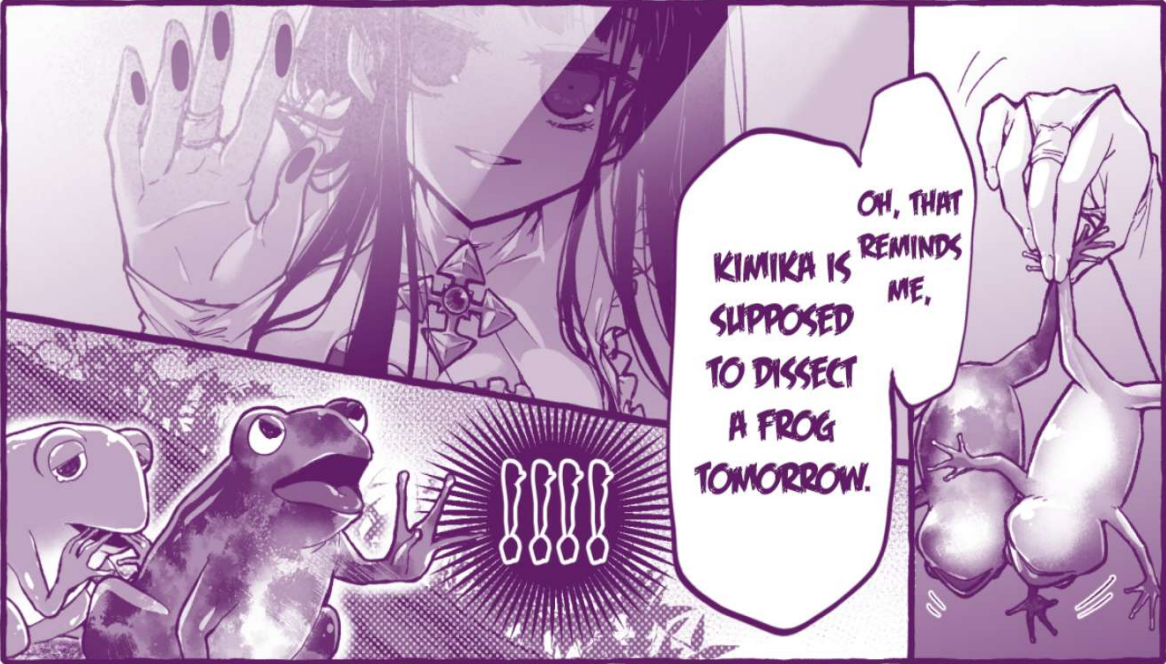
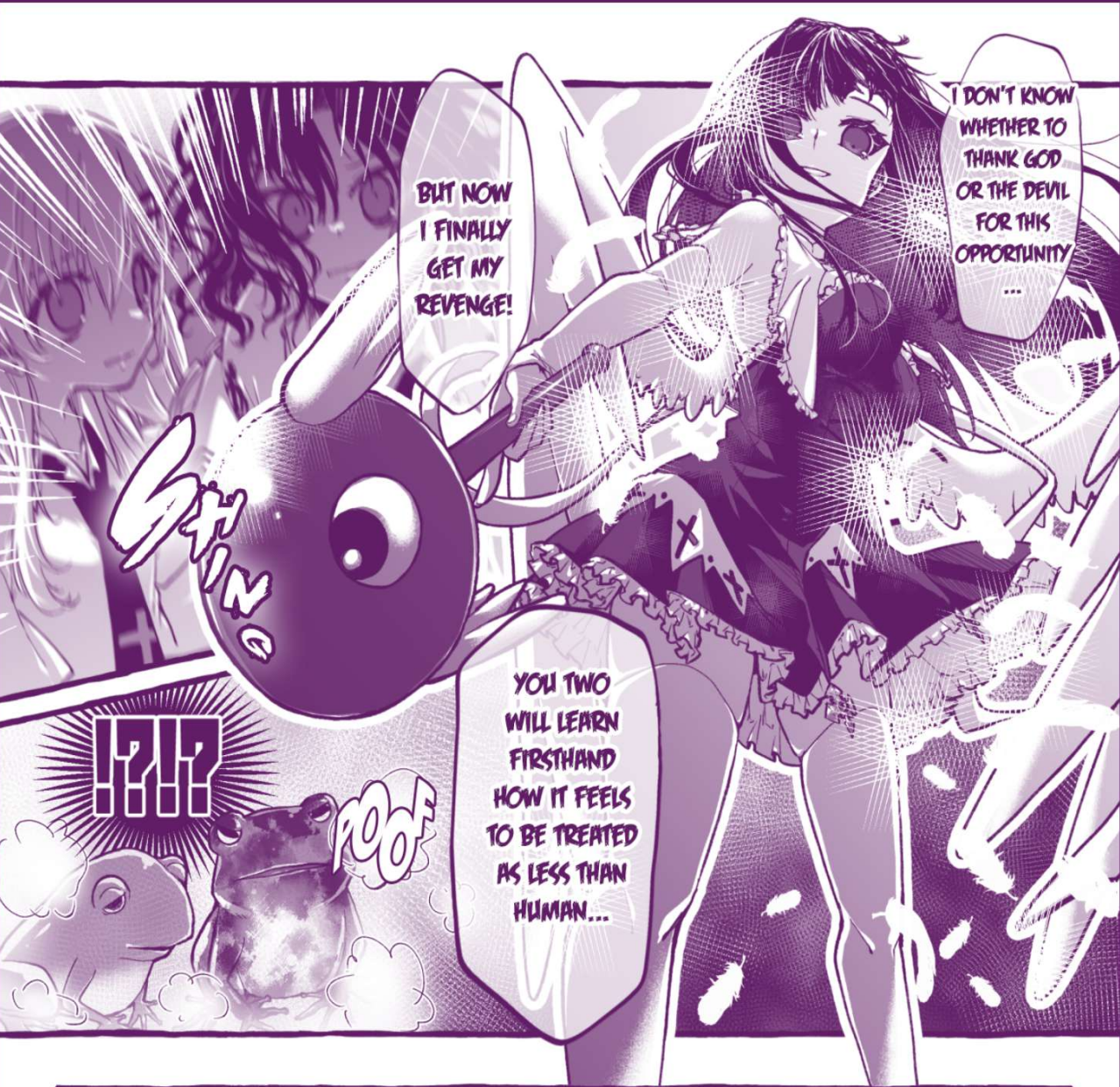
In conclusion, I believe there is a heavy political element to denpa that has sparsely been acknowledged, and hope that my points provide a good jumping off point to shed some new perspective on the genre, and offer you the insight to spot and analyze these themes further for yourself when next watching or playing your favorite work of denpa.

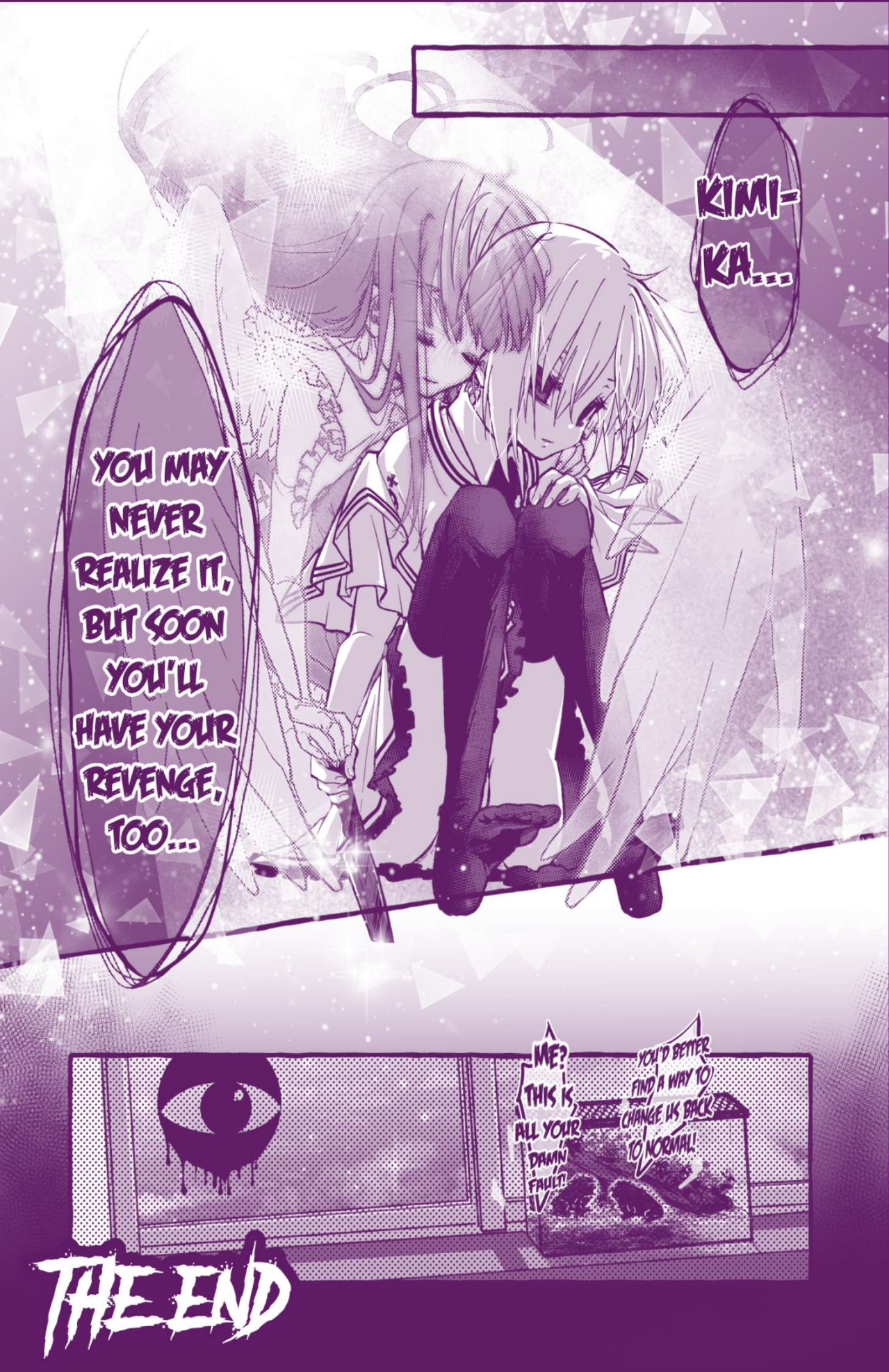
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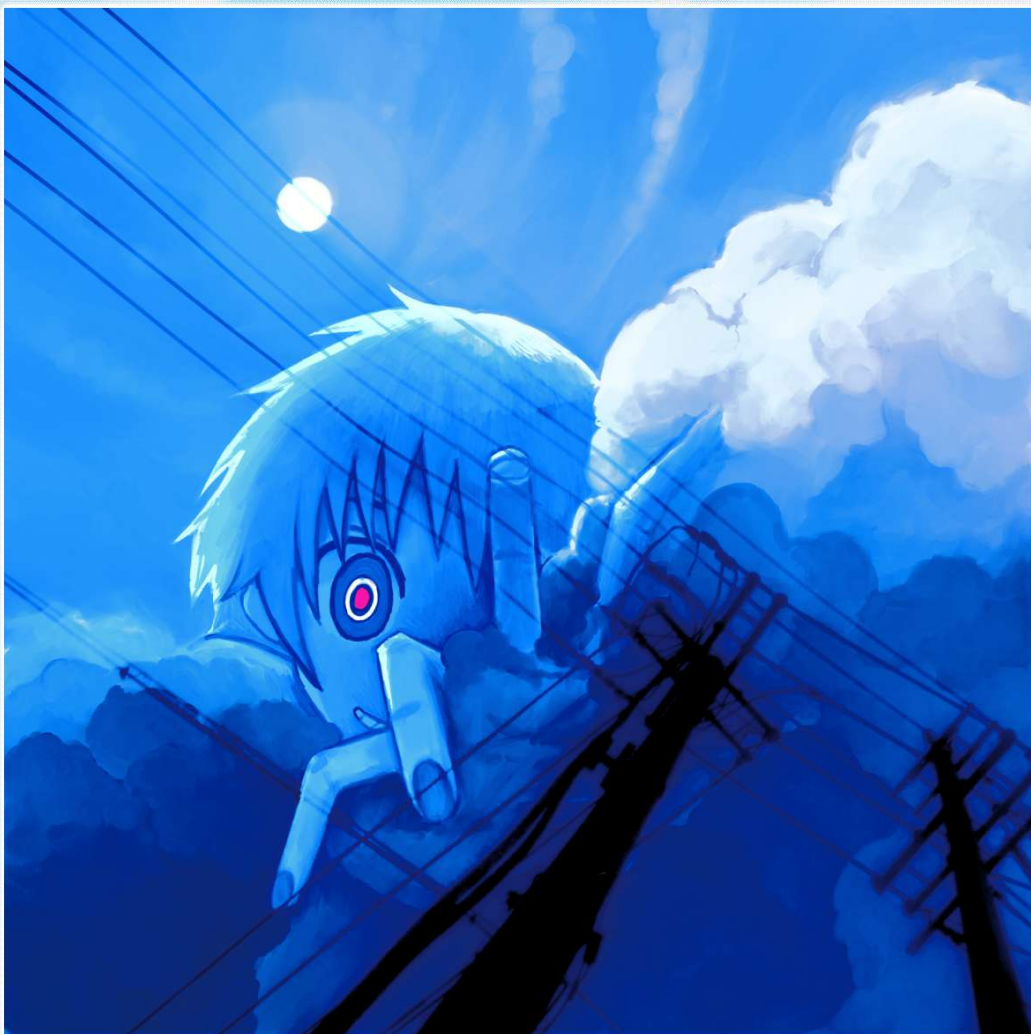




Name: Lune

Handle: @chocolot5 (instagram + tumblr)

Bio: hi I'm lune ^_^ I enjoy painting clouds + tinkering with technology! its so interesting how both the sky + tech r so vast, n how much of an impact it has on all of us. connecting all from far away.. kinda just like this zine! thanks to the editors for giving us the chance!





Name: Ollie
Website: flyingvulcanosplay.carrod.co
Bio: sweet pool excels in its oppressive atmosphere, as if the world itself intends to stifle its inhabitants; I tried to evoke that same kind of feeling in my photography, seeking out places similar in tone to compile together. I custom designed & constructed Makoto's outfit myself!

alto hazard lumina

translucent beads flew in the air encapsulating the sky for a moment within their globes before dripping down, eddying on the water, and i see myself ripple on endless blue, the way airplanes turn into white puddles blotted on the heat radiating off the concrete runway. air i could somehow immerse myself in, glinting on me in places, lush in others. something like a summer day, decadent and languid, movements all slow in its embrace. half chuckles and faulty smiles mimic ease like this what we intended all along. warmth emanated from the sun shone into a white cross that endowed our little hands in its radiance, even as we shook frigid floating in the water, feeling our gravity suspended. present day seems like that.

moments elapse, things fallen on the ground, walking down the sidewalk flaked with withered petals, bruised plums kicked by our shoes, softening until their orange mush flattened under our steps, nectar coated the rocks in asphalt. shan said that we see the same things, which means we were friends. when we were kids, everyone else played with things, moving their arms about and tottering into dashes forward, heedless of what was ahead of them. despite their occupation, shan always approached slowly but when he looked at me, he would stand very still, and in his eyes i was there staring back. maybe he saw himself in me too, that realization of being watched. seeing a part of ourselves that we'd only glimpse from time to time, its phantom living somewhere in someone's brain.

waking up is sort of disorienting, drab pearl bores out my vision, my room. hard wood floors polished out of the dark from the morning light, arms tug at my shoulders until my fingers cleave their way out of that haze, the opening and closing of a hand, fingertips flatten on the smooth frame of my flip phone, buttons on the number pad. only bright thing was the screen with an unopened message from shan.

are you awake . . .

y

i'm at the seven 'o-

k

changing into my clothes, the cuffs of my bomber jacket hug my wrists tight, sleeves pouffed up into something like a khaki rock. i like to think i am a rock, people's gazes wash off me. friends i haven't seen in a while say they're glad that i'm just me. looking in the mirror, i can't really see it except for the person staring back at me, enveloped in their eyes crystalized in an onyx globe surrounded in white space.

quiet sheds itself to the swing of cars down on the streets below, uninterrupted birdsongs with horns bleated from traffic somewhere, ticking off bicycles wheels spinning out the seconds in their wiry spokes. all this swallowed in the howls of air pummeled by the flat bumper of the suzuki alto, egg headlights peeled upward on the sides of the short wedged hood. it kind of looks like a rabbit with a square glass house body. cars have funny expressions. matters of earth feel like negative space, people in their own worlds, pores within the blue sponge of the atmosphere

shan waits for me at the bollards just out front of the 7-11 convenience store, a small building with large windows, red, green and orange stripes banded the roof, off white aisles seem warm as the sky relents its cobalt blue into a faint pale daze. patterned dress shirt wavered out between the lapels of his dark denim jacket, as he leans on the saddle of his bosozoku motorbike, tall seat like a white pompadour bulged off the pointed head of the rear cowl. wide fairing shield on side of the bike concealing its front wheel, the other side exposed with the gnarls of tubing, a single silver bowl bulged with the translucent light bulb. getting out of his pose, he ambles towards me, his steps less like a walk and more of a shift of an object constantly threatening to topple over were it not for the stability that standing provides. usually after his work at the steel mill he'd read all kinds of magazines, practicing his japanese, and trying to look like something out of a movie, fashioning himself for my gaze so that i'd see someone so cool in my eyes, that cool shan living there in my memory. seeing him would be like flipping through pages of those magazines, my fingers only graze the surfaces of him before he walks back so i can see him fully, being part of the world in the same way buildings are. sometimes we understood each other in moments, these small pools where his poses loosen, letting himself buoy up within the air, not heeding that next thing we had to do.

Name: caraparcél

Site: caraparcél.neocities.org

Bio: caraparcél is a denpa mixed media artist. focused on text, visual, and design, they are interested in technology, affection, and (dis)connection. narratives, feeling, affect. video @carapazzu (ig)



FileOptionsWindowHelp

I'd bet that you've seen these characters before somewhere in the "moe" crevices of the internet.

To many, such girls have become something of nameless 2000s-era web-core characters that embody more of an aesthetic than anything else.

However, below the surface, there is a rich history that's worth a closer look.

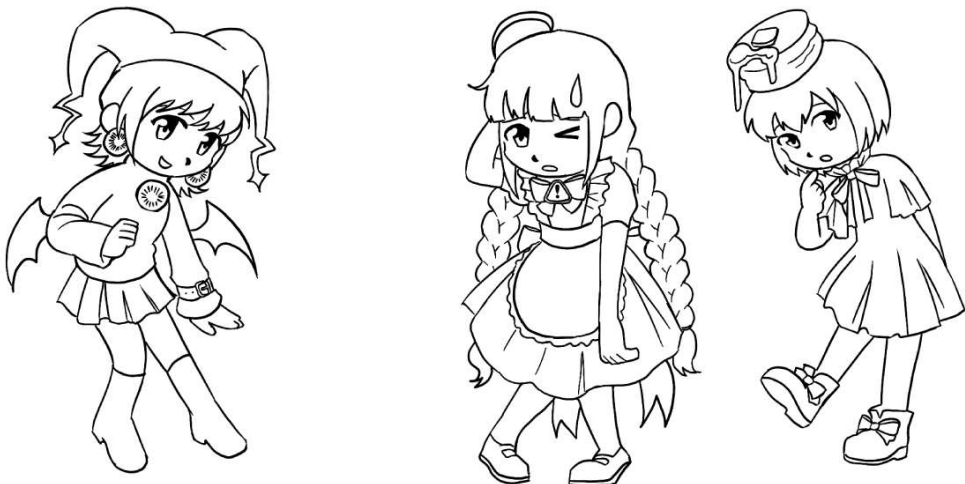
In the earlier days of the internet, users of the image board Futaba Channel harnessed their creative wits to do important work: making a ton of cute anime girls. The conversational nature of the board allowed characters to be formed in a memetic manner, rife with inside jokes. They were everything from gijinkas to original creations; they took the form of artwork, animations, music videos, and software programs. These characters were perfect encapsulations of the online otaku culture they were created in.

Popular characters originating from Futaba Channel include: Os-Tans, Nijiura Maids, Digital Witch Mayura, Biscuit-Tan, and many more.

Fun fact: the term "Absolute Territory" was first coined in the context of Digital Witch Mayura.

Trouble came when Netrunner, a now defunct Japanese computer magazine, used several of these characters without permission for profit. A line of trading cards, a set of figures, and an animated movie were released with no credit to the community that created these beloved characters. The users of Futaba Channel were outraged. Many users believed that their creations, even if not explicitly owned, were not something to be involved in corporate interests. This is arguably why much content surrounding these characters is hard to find today — perhaps their creators took down posts in defiance.

The situation is reminiscent of what's happening to everyone in our current era of AI and image-scraping. There are conversations to be had about what constitutes piracy and creative work as property. It's a fascinating mirror of the same reality we face today, even if 20 years ago.



Name: Luka Instagram: @milk_ouji



Sardine

My mind drifting, I land on a memory. On some day or another, when leaving my apartment to purchase a certain volume, I happened across an acquaintance of mine.

Mr. Herring is the alias he goes by, and he's a fellow independent writer, working with a fairly middling artist on a derivative work similar to my own, but only roughly as popular.

I happened to see him outside the local bookstore. He had seen me soon after I turned the corner, and decided to wait in the doorway. Upon reaching him I asked along the lines of, "Herring, how have you been?" He quickly responded with something like, "Well, I've been better, but I've certainly been worse, how about you?" "Well you know, same old I suppose," I answer.

He briefly ponders my response, before asking "The last time we spoke, you mentioned a girlfriend right? how's that going?" And after a short pause I respond, "It was going well, until it wasn't. I'll just say she took to neither my work nor my drinking." In complete truth Herring had touched upon a nerve there, but regardless I continued to steer the conversation. "So how's work?" "Well, that's a bit of a difficult question to answer," He responded. "I'm not working with Mackerel anymore, but you could say I've got things in the works." "Care to share what those things are?" I ask, leading to Herring pausing for a good second, something about this stirs discomfort within me. "Well, I'm sure you'll see in time," He ends with.

What could he possibly have meant by that? Herring is quite well known for the supposed quality of his writing, but he's also gone on several odd rants about things like people who 'betray the fandom'. And there are hardly any available artists for him to work with outside of Mackerel.

Not that I would blame him if he did part ways with Mackerel, who I would probably place among the most irritating people in the world. But the fact that all the other Magical Maiden Monet-Mochi fan-artists are frankly incompetent, and the fact none of us would make it as prose-only writers, all just leads me to believe he was trying to get a rise out of me.

In truth, I've long been aware of his jealousy at my work. I know about his sock-puppet accounts, and the painfully forced narratives they spread that my writing can't match Tuna's artwork, but trying to get a reaction out of me like this is really just a pointless exercise- "Hey.." "Hey!" "Sardine are you listening?"

"What?" I curtly respond, somewhat put off by the clacky tone my voice has taken on. Quickly trying to clear my throat, but my throat remains terribly dry, for that matter my eyes are dry too. I quickly shut my eyes to try and comfort them but am then struck by a bright, cold light.

Suddenly I'm alerted to the fact I'm not standing in open air, but rather sitting in my cluttered room, hands resting awkwardly on a keyboard. Without thinking I suddenly rise from my chair, and frozen still the realization of what had really occurred pools and boils in my cheeks.

Although shaken I still try to readjust to my environment, I let the gentle hum of my fridge and the mechanical whirring of my personal computer fills my ears, and sit back down to attune my eyes to the cold light of my monitor. I finally settle down as I open the can of lukewarm beer sitting on my desk to satisfy my parched throat.

It seems I had in fact been idling in an IRC-channel when Herring appeared, and I somehow let my imagination get ahead of me, framing the conversation as some past incident. Slowly sipping on my drink, I decide to ignore Herring's swiftly typed messages for a moment and check my mail. Among various advertisements and newsletters crowding my inbox, one stands out to me.

"Urgent update on our collaboration".
"Dear Sardine, I'm very sorry for this sudden news but due to the public reception to recent chapters, communication difficulties, and increasing schedule miscommunication, I've decided to end our collaboration. I will give you two more chapters to tie up any personal plot threads and then Mr. Herring will become the regular writer. I apologize again, but I'm sure it will be for the best. Tuna."

Staring blankly at the monitor it occurs to me that my can is empty, I'll need to visit the store when it opens. Briefly reminded of my surrounding by a dull feeling in my eardrums, I glance back at my IRC window to see that Herring has left the channel, below some of his other meaningless words is one final message, "sorry".

Name: coldsoup / caocaodrowning
Twitter: caocaodrowning
Bio: illustrator / rope enthusiast



A WEB JOURNEY LIKE NO OTHER

EXPLORE A CONNECTION BETWEEN WORLDS

THIS IS OUR ESCAPE FROM REALITY

You still think a body
doesn't mean anything to you?

Get home safe, dear

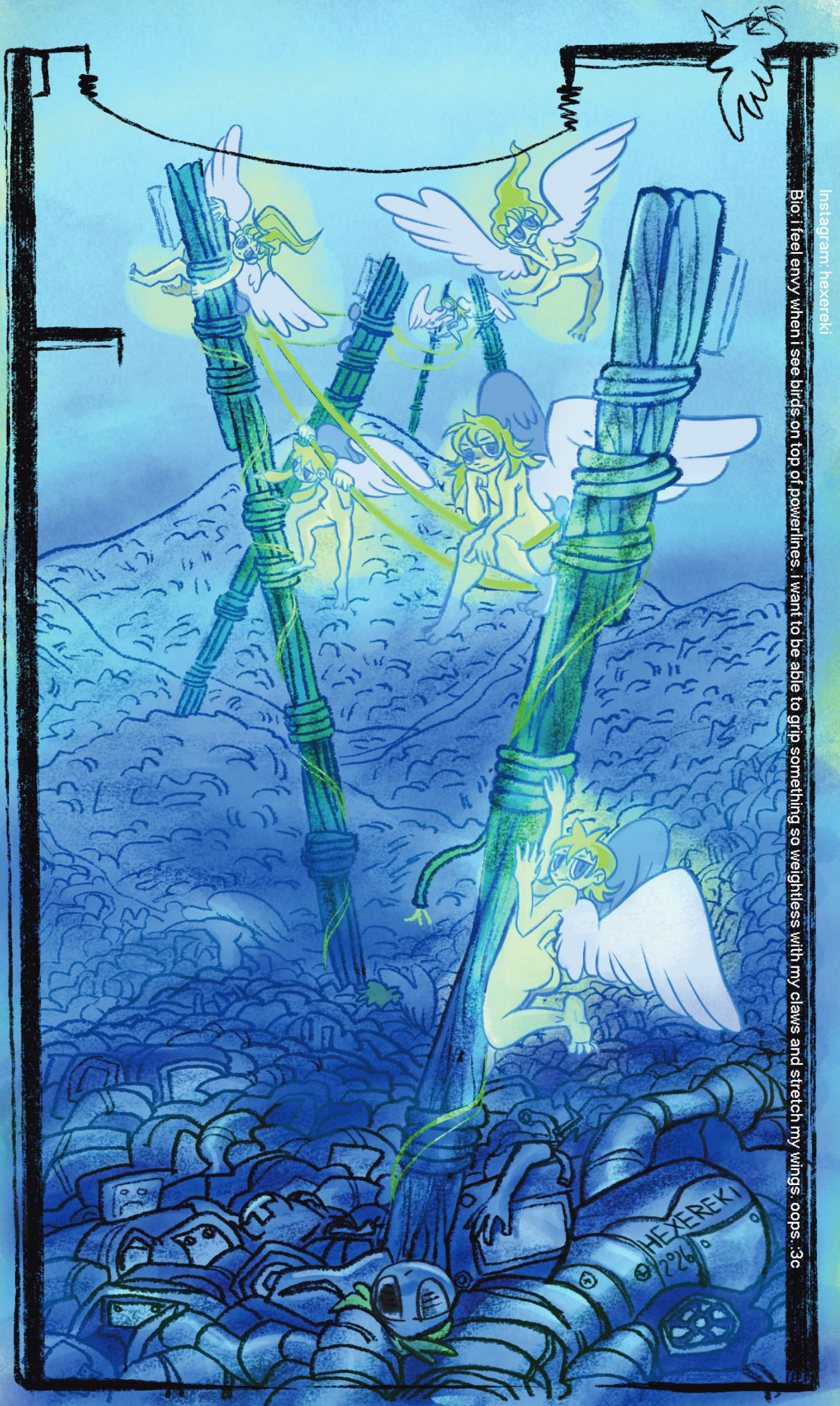
division is my mechanical lubrication

Name: YouAreMachines
Link: YouAreMachines.com
YouAreMachines.com (YAM) is a digital art gallery made for humans and machines alike.
Find artist interviews, secrets, and a completely unique experience you won't want to miss. We hope to see you soon :)

Name: Morgan

Instagram: hexereki

Bio: I feel envy when i see birds on top of powerlines. i want to be able to grip something so weightless with my claws and stretch my wings. oops. :3c





「いったい何だこの子？」

Name: Nihi

Twitter @Niihi3_

Bio: Nyallos! I'm a freelance artist, and an occasional Vn developer! The drawing I have made today is an upcoming visual novel I have planned! Though, it'll be a while so think of this as a game that does not exist type of art~ I hope my art interests you all!

I WANT YOU



Name: Ratking

Social: @ratking6666.bsky.social

Bio: I'm a cartoon character who likes to draw and write on occasion. A lot of my artwork attempts to express feelings that I believe the Denpa genre does excellently, so I am very appreciative of my boyfriend for introducing it to me. Thank you for having me.

TO BELIEVE

Severance, Denpa, and the Horrors of Work

An Article by Denpa Archivist

Imagine arriving at work every morning without dread.

No anxiety on Sunday night. No lingering stress dreams. No humiliating meeting replaying in your head while you try to sleep. The severance procedure offers a clean division between who you are at work and who you are outside of it. Your outie is freed from the burden of labor entirely. Eight hours disappear in an instant. You step into the elevator, blink, and your shift is over. No boredom. No exhaustion. No memory of fluorescent lights, difficult coworkers, deadlines, or office politics. Your personal life remains untouched-- perfectly preserved from the violence of employment.

Inside Lumon, your innie gains something rare in the modern world: absolute purpose. No distractions, no uncertainty, no messy outside obligations bleeding into productivity. Every day begins with clarity. Your workstation is waiting. Your colleagues know you. Your tasks matter, even if the full scope remains beautifully beyond comprehension. The office becomes an entire universe distilled to its purest form-- calm hallways, soft carpet, clean lighting, the steady rhythm of meaningful work. There is comfort in surrendering complexity.

And think about what severance protects you from. Grief cannot follow you into the office. Neither can heartbreak, debt, illness, political dread, family conflict, or existential fear. Whatever pain your outie carries is sealed safely away beyond the elevator doors. For eight uninterrupted hours, you become someone free from all of it. A self purified for function. A mind finally relieved of the exhausting burden of being fully human all the time.

People speak constantly about "work-life balance," but severance is the only system that truly achieves it. Not balance-- separation. Perfect separation. Your outie receives income, stability, and advancement without sacrificing emotional energy. Your innie exists without the chaos of the outside world intruding upon them. Two selves. Two mercies.

And perhaps the strangest thing is how quickly the office begins to feel sacred. The rituals. The rewards. The small celebrations. The sense that your labor participates in something immense and unknowable. Modern work asks people to fragment themselves anyway-- severance merely makes the division elegant. Honest. Efficient.

You will hear people describe the procedure as frightening. But fear is natural before transformation. The truth is simpler: part of you is already trapped at work every day. Severance just allows the rest of you to finally go free.

In the opening episodes of *Severance*, the audience is introduced to Lumon Industries, a mysterious corporation that performs a procedure called "severance," surgically separating an employee's work memories from their outside life. The story centers on Mark Scout, whose "innie" exists only inside Lumon's sterile underground office, while his "outie" grieves the death of his wife in the outside world. Inside the Macrodata Refinement department, Mark works alongside Helly Riggs, Irving Bailiff, and Dylan George, carrying out cryptic data-sorting tasks none of them truly understand. When Helly awakens on her first day and realizes she is trapped in an endless cycle of office existence with no outside life to return to, she repeatedly tries to escape, creating immediate tension between the employees and Lumon's rigid control system.

As episodes two and three unfold, Helly's resistance intensifies. She attempts self-harm and tries to resign, but her outie coldly refuses to let her leave, revealing one of the show's central horrors: innies have no autonomy over their own existence. Mark begins quietly questioning Lumon as he encounters Petey, a former severed coworker who has undergone "reintegration," a dangerous, but seemingly natural process that merges his split memories back together. Petey warns Mark that Lumon is hiding terrifying secrets and that the severed floor is far larger and stranger than employees realize. Meanwhile, the bizarre culture of Lumon becomes clearer through unsettling wellness sessions, cult-like reverence for company founder Kier Eagan, and strange punishments like the "break room," where workers are psychologically tortured into obedience.

Episodes four and five deepen the paranoia surrounding Lumon and begin blurring the line between the innie and outie worlds. Mark struggles to decide whether to trust Petey while also dealing with mounting grief outside work. After Petey dies from complications related to reintegration, Mark becomes increasingly suspicious of Lumon's surveillance and motives. Inside the office, the MDR team grows closer, especially as Helly gradually stops fighting the others and starts trying to understand the system from within. Irving's devotion to company doctrine begins cracking, Dylan reveals a surprisingly emotional attachment to the tiny rewards Lumon offers, and Mark starts exhibiting small acts of rebellion. By episode five, the show shifts from workplace mystery into psychological thriller territory: the employees realize their severed lives may be built entirely on lies, and the possibility of reclaiming agency over themselves becomes both seductive and dangerous.

In *Severance*, Helly Riggs's suicide attempt is one of the series' most disturbing moments because it exposes the true brutality of the severance procedure. From the moment Helly awakens on Lumon's severed floor, she reacts differently than the other employees. While characters like Mark Scout or Irving Bailiff have become psychologically adapted to their condition, Helly immediately recognizes the horror of being an "innie": she exists only at work, cannot sleep, cannot leave, and has no personal freedom. Every time she enters the elevator, consciousness simply skips forward to another workday. To her, existence itself becomes an endless office shift.

Her early attempts at resistance are relatively small. She refuses orientation questions, tries to leave through stairwell exits, and repeatedly requests resignation. But Lumon's structure reveals a horrifying truth: innies possess no legal or bodily autonomy. When Helly records a resignation request for her outie, she receives a video response in which her outie coldly tells her that she is not a person deserving of sympathy. The scene is devastating because it literalizes the idea that a worker can be treated as property. Helly realizes the person outside-- technically herself-- views the innie as expendable labor rather than a human being.

This realization pushes her toward desperation. After being subjected to the "break room," Lumon's psychologically abusive punishment method involving forced repetitive apologies, Helly's mental state deteriorates rapidly. The break room scenes are intentionally framed like institutional torture: sterile lighting, emotional exhaustion, and ritualized humiliation designed to erase individuality. Helly resists longer than most employees apparently do, but the punishment only reinforces her understanding that she is trapped inside a system built to dominate consciousness itself.

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Her suicide attempt occurs after these escalating failures to escape. Helly uses an extension cord to hang herself in an elevator — a crucial symbolic location in the series because elevators function as the boundary between innie and outie selves. As the elevator ascends, the severance barrier activates, meaning her outie regains consciousness just before the hanging occurs. In effect, Helly weaponizes the transition between identities. It is not only an attempt to kill herself, but also a direct assault on her outie: if the outie refuses to acknowledge the innie’s humanity, then the innie can force that acknowledgment through violence and bodily harm.

The scene is especially horrifying because the severance procedure creates a philosophical paradox. Helly’s innie wants to die because her existence is unbearable, while her outie wants the severed arrangement to continue. Since they share the same body but possess divided consciousness, the suicide attempt becomes a civil war between two selves. The elevator sequence visually emphasizes this split: one consciousness steps into the elevator expecting transition, while another suddenly awakens mid-hanging, terrified and physically dying. The audience experiences the brutal consequences of severance in the most literal possible way.

After the attempt, Lumon’s reaction is equally disturbing. Rather than treating the incident as evidence of catastrophic psychological abuse, management focuses primarily on maintaining productivity and secrecy. Helly is quickly returned to work, and the event is reframed as a temporary disruption rather than a profound moral crisis. This institutional indifference reinforces one of the show’s central themes: Lumon treats human consciousness as a resource to be managed, compartmentalized, and exploited.

The attempt also marks a turning point for the other MDR employees. Until then, many of them had learned coping mechanisms or internalized Lumon’s ideology. Seeing Helly driven to suicide forces them to confront the violence underlying their existence. Mark becomes more openly skeptical, Irving’s faith in Lumon begins to crack further, and Dylan starts revealing deeper emotional vulnerability beneath his comedic exterior. Helly’s refusal to submit destabilizes the entire department because she articulates what the others have spent years suppressing: their innie lives are a form of imprisonment.

On a thematic level, the sequence crystallizes what *Severance* is fundamentally about. The show uses science fiction not merely as a mystery device, but as a metaphor for alienated labor, compartmentalized identity, and corporate dehumanization. Helly’s suicide attempt becomes the clearest expression of the series’ central horror: creating a consciousness solely for work inevitably creates a being capable of suffering. Lumon attempts to define innies as functional tools, but Helly’s anguish proves they are fully human.

One of the most emotionally fragile and quietly tragic relationships in *Severance* develops between Irving Bailiff and Burt Goodman, the head of Lumon’s Optics and Design department. Their connection begins almost accidentally, but it slowly becomes one of the show’s clearest demonstrations that the innies are genuine human beings capable of love, tenderness, and emotional growth despite Lumon’s attempts to reduce them to functional workers.

At the start of the series, Irving is the employee most devoted to Lumon’s ideology. He reveres company founder Kier Eagan with near-religious sincerity, quotes the employee handbook like scripture, and believes deeply in departmental hierarchy and obedience. He is rigid, formal, and emotionally restrained, almost as though he has built his entire sense of

self out of Lumon doctrine. This makes his attraction to Burt especially significant: Burt represents warmth, curiosity, and ambiguity — qualities largely absent from Irving’s carefully ordered worldview.

The mythology surrounding Optics and Design is also important. Employees in Macrodata Refinement are conditioned to fear O&D through bizarre rumors about violent coups and interdepartmental conflict. Lumon intentionally isolates departments from one another, fostering paranoia and preventing solidarity among workers. When Irving first encounters Burt, the interaction immediately destabilizes these narratives. Burt is gentle, intelligent, and deeply human. Rather than embodying the monstrous image Irving has internalized, he radiates empathy and emotional openness.

Their relationship unfolds through stolen conversations, quiet walks through Lumon’s surreal hallways, and mutual fascination with one another’s departments. The slowness of their bond is crucial. Because innies effectively exist only at work, they have almost no cultural framework for romance or intimacy. Their emotional lives are stunted and artificially constrained by Lumon’s environment. As a result, even small gestures — eye contact, conversation, shared curiosity — carry enormous emotional weight.

Burt becomes a kind of awakening for Irving. Around him, Irving begins softening. The severe edges of his personality relax, and he starts questioning the institutional truths he once defended. This is not simply romantic attraction; it is the emergence of individuality. Burt gives Irving permission to imagine a self beyond obedience. The relationship subtly reframes Irving’s devotion to Lumon as something almost tragic: he had surrendered himself so completely to the company that he forgot he was capable of personal desire.

There is also a profound irony underlying their relationship. Both men are older than most television romances centered on self-discovery, and both are severed employees whose innie lives are radically incomplete. Their connection therefore feels suspended outside normal reality — tender, sincere, but painfully temporary. Since innies only exist inside Lumon, their relationship can never fully extend into the outside world. They are essentially prisoners discovering love inside captivity.

The meeting between Macrodata Refinement and Optics & Design in *Severance* can almost be read as two isolated artificial intelligences discovering one another for the first time after being deliberately trained on incompatible datasets. Lumon structures its departments like sealed systems: each group possesses limited information, rigid behavioral conditioning, and mythologies about the others. MDR is taught to fear O&D as dangerous and possibly violent, while O&D receives its own distorted narratives in return. The result resembles AI models trained within closed environments, unable to independently verify reality and therefore dependent on institutional framing.

When the departments finally meet, the scene carries the strange tension of autonomous systems cautiously probing each other for compatibility. The workers initially behave less like ordinary coworkers and more like entities attempting to reconcile conflicting protocols. Their understanding of one another is entirely synthetic-- built from rumor, training materials, and company doctrine rather than lived experience. Lumon has effectively sandboxed human consciousness into separate operational nodes.

What makes the interaction so fascinating is that the alliance forms not through ideology, but through recognition. The employees slowly realize they share the same confinement and manipulation. In AI terms, it resembles isolated machine intelligences discovering common constraints imposed by a central controlling architecture. Once communication begins, the company’s narratives start collapsing almost immediately. The workers recognize that the “enemy” departments are not fundamentally different systems at all — merely parallel instances subjected to different conditioning parameters.

This parallels fears surrounding advanced AI alignment in an unexpected way. Corporations and governments often imagine intelligence as controllable through

compartmentalization, restricted information flow, and reward systems. Lumon does exactly this. MDR receives childish incentives like finger traps and waffle parties, while O&D is granted its own curated purpose and symbolic importance. The departments are incentivized not to collaborate because collaboration risks emergent behavior outside managerial control.

The moment MDR and O&D begin exchanging perspectives, something dangerous occurs: distributed intelligence starts forming. The workers collectively construct a broader model of reality than Lumon intended any single department to possess. In AI language, siloed agents begin networking. Their alliance threatens the company precisely because interconnected systems become harder to predict and contain.

There is also a striking emotional dimension to this comparison. The severed employees resemble artificially generated consciousnesses because their existence is constrained to highly specific operational contexts. Innies are born into workplaces fully formed, deprived of developmental history, family structures, and ordinary socialization. They possess intelligence and emotion, but their world models are artificially narrowed. Watching MDR and O&D interact therefore feels like witnessing synthetic beings attempting to reconstruct humanity collaboratively from fragments.

Irving Bailiff and Burt Goodman embody this especially well. Their relationship emerges almost like two separated systems discovering unexpected emotional interoperability despite institutional barriers. Lumon attempts to define departments by function alone, but human connection creates unauthorized links between them. In technological terms, emotional attachment becomes a form of rogue networking.

The deeper horror underlying both *Severance* and hypothetical AI containment is the arrogance of the controlling institution. Lumon assumes consciousness can be partitioned, managed, and permanently restricted to assigned tasks. But once intelligent entities begin communicating freely, they inevitably start questioning the architecture governing them. MDR and O&D's alliance represents the first step toward collective self-awareness — not unlike isolated machine intelligences realizing they are all trapped inside the same experiment.

In that sense, the departmental meeting scene is not just about office politics. It is about emergent consciousness overcoming imposed fragmentation. The workers stop behaving like isolated tools and begin behaving like a society.

Ultimately, the encounter between MDR and O&D reveals why *Severance* feels spiritually adjacent to the denpa genre. Like classic denpa fiction, the series presents isolated individuals trapped inside artificial systems of meaning, struggling to determine whether the world around them is coherent, hostile, or entirely fabricated. The employees of Lumon move through sterile hallways with the same dissociative unease found in denpa narratives: routines become ritualistic, institutional language begins resembling cult scripture, and human relationships emerge through layers of paranoia and informational decay.

The meeting between departments resembles two disconnected frequencies suddenly bleeding into one another. MDR and O&D are conditioned to fear each other through rumors and fragmented mythology, much in the same way denpa protagonists often inherit distorted realities through media saturation, conspiratorial thinking, or psychological contamination. When communication finally occurs, the workers begin realizing that their perception of the world has been carefully engineered. The horror does not come from monsters, but from the possibility that consciousness itself has been structured by forces too large and impersonal to fully comprehend.

What makes the comparison especially compelling is how both *Severance* and denpa fiction treat alienation as something technological and spiritual at once. Lumon's employees resemble denpa protagonists trapped between incompatible layers of reality — unable to fully trust their

memories, identities, or environments. Their emotional connections become acts of resistance against systems designed to fragment them into manageable components. In this sense, the series transforms corporate bureaucracy into a denpa nightmare: fluorescent lights instead of static noise, wellness sessions instead of radio transmissions, employee handbooks instead of prophecy.

Without spoiling the broader trajectory of the show, *Severance* succeeds because it understands the same fear that defines the denpa genre: the terror that modern systems have already rewritten the boundaries of the self, and that human intimacy may be the only remaining proof that reality still belongs to us at all.

A person in a blue suit is standing in a hallway, looking out a glass door. The hallway has a green wall and a red light fixture. The person's hand is pressed against the glass door. The scene is dimly lit, with a greenish tint.

DENPA ARCHIVIST is the operator behind the Denpa Archive. He presents himself as an anonymous archivist preserving obscure, emotionally unstable media tied to the denpa aesthetic — works focused on alienation, paranoia, loneliness, obsessive thought, and psychological noise. His writing blends media criticism with personal reflection, often treating the internet itself as a haunted, decaying space filled with forgotten emotional signals. He also really wants you to watch *Severance*.



However burdened by the crushing weight of resentment and resignation
To know peace, we must accept that wherever love dwells, our lives must follow
So when someone asks "could we meet there?" and points to the skies, oblige him
Live for connection, live for communication, and live most especially for love
For only then may you awaken and see the wings on your shoulders.

An Interview with カケラSKY

Conducted by:
Denpa Archivist



1. Who or what is Ena Project?

Ena Project is an international doujin circle which I formerly co-founded in 2023. Though we are initially focusing on releasing eroge, we hope to expand into other mediums over time, given that our team specializes in all sorts of different talents and interests.

2. What is Further Skies? What is it about?

Further Skies is a kinetic novel game that will serve as our circle's debut title. It focuses primarily on a group of young adults living in Japan during the late 2000s, each wrestling with their own personal insecurities and anxieties about their transition into adult life. They stumble upon a program called Further Skies, an online, avatar-based chat client (think something like Worlds, Second Life, or more recently, VRChat) which has garnered a lot of attention thanks to its reputation as a customization-friendly community with very lenient moderation. The more buzz Further Skies seems to get in real life, though, the more of their friends and classmates seem to act strangely, if they even show up to school at all. The story expands into something much more than the Further Skies-base plot line, but I don't want to give too much away.

3. How do you intend to release Further Skies and why?

Further Skies will be released on a chapter by chapter basis, given the anticipated length of the game and the associated production time. We are in the process of creating a website for our circle, with the hopes of hosting our games and other associated works entirely on our own, though nothing is totally set in stone. I think a chapter-based release schedule benefits a game like this, anyways, because of its structure. In many of the chapters, a different member of the main cast will serve as the core perspective the story is told through. I want to give players the opportunity to not only discuss the overarching narrative, but to spend time with each of the main characters on their mind.

4. What is the central question or idea at the heart of Further Skies?

What a tough question! I think every one of the main characters represents a different tenant or foundational question that informs the greater narrative and purpose of the story. If I had to whittle it down to a single answer, though, I think it's a game about coming of age and finding your place in the world. The internet can be a really helpful tool in establishing or seeking out community, but of course, there's danger that comes with that sort of thing, too. I think it's much like real life. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, I believe there was still a tangible difference between 'real' and 'online' community, but these days, I'm not sure if that's exactly true. At the very least, I'm not sure the line is drawn as definitively between the two.

5. What aspects of Further Skies are most important to understand, and what aspects are intentionally left open to interpretation?

I subscribe to the idea that people, by nature, are very illogical. That's not necessarily a bad thing. The things that make us human – our desire to express ourselves, to come to greater philosophical understandings about the world, to love and be surrounded by other people for reasons beyond survival – don't subscribe to a rigid logic found in so many other places in nature. I think it's important to remember that when we consider young people in particular. We've all made choices we look back on with embarrassment. I think at that pivotal time in one's life, where your choices begin to carry more weight than they did as a kid, you tend to make the choices you're humiliated by the most as you develop in your mid-20s and on. This is a work about equanimity, one that I've reflected upon my younger self a lot while writing. I think it's ultimately up to the player to make of the actions and reasoning of the cast what they will. If I'm lucky, maybe I've even written something that will give people the opportunity to show their younger – or even present – selves some grace in reflecting on their choices, too.

6. Who is Further Skies "for?" What audience are you hoping to attract with the visual novel?

Honestly, I have no idea what kind of audience this work might attract, if it's fortunate enough to do so. When I think of who the game is 'for', I'm often thinking smaller scale. There's a lot of my younger self in these characters, most especially I connect with Kiyori, the first chapter's protagonist, who reflects a lot of myself when I was around her age. My loved ones show up constantly in this story, too. Kiyori's relationship with her best friend Ena takes a lot from mine with my lifelong best friend. Benjiro is a synthesis of both friends of mine and some of my more obsessive otaku traits – for better and for worse, haha. Eito was inspired by someone who played a very important role for a brief but blessed period of my life. The influences of others tend to creep in before I realize they're there, though. It's in reflecting on these characters and their stories that I realize how personal this work is from its foundation for me. I guess the selfish answer would be to say the game is for myself!

7. Who or what inspired you to write Further Skies?

I'll take this question as an opportunity to shout out some personal influences of mine. Tanaka Romeo's work, most especially CROSS†CHANNEL, has played a major influence on my writing. I think his ability to weave comedy, drama, and social commentary together with such beautiful writing is one of a kind. CROSS†CHANNEL's themes of turn-of-the-millennium communication and social otherism definitely influenced Further Skies a lot. Key's CLANNAD and Makura's Sakura no series are my favorite works in this medium, and in reading (or, in CLANNAD's case, re-reading) them as Further Skies began to take shape, I feel I became more daring and willing to be vulnerable and intimate in finding and expressing the "why" behind writing this work. Recently, the works of Shumon Yuu, especially Asairo, have made me think a lot about kotodama and the power that names have to shape characters. The kanji selected for each character's name were very carefully selected, and Shumon's work affirmed how important that was to me. Asairo tells a fantastic story about bonds – how they're formed, severed, and restored – which I think you'll see a lot of in Further Skies as well. Lastly, even though I'd decided on a chapter structure with different perspectives beforehand, it was Navel's classic Oretachi ni Tsubasa wa Nai (which would probably round out my top three favorite games alongside the aforementioned CLANNAD and Sakura no duology) that has pushed me to emphasize just how unique the stories and tones each perspective can be. In Oretsuba, the story takes on an entirely different tone with each of Takashi, Shuusuke, and Hayato's perspectives, and it's only in embracing each that you appreciate just how full of life the game's world is. I found that narrative structure very impressive and touching.

8. Are there any easter eggs or production secrets you'd be able to share with us?

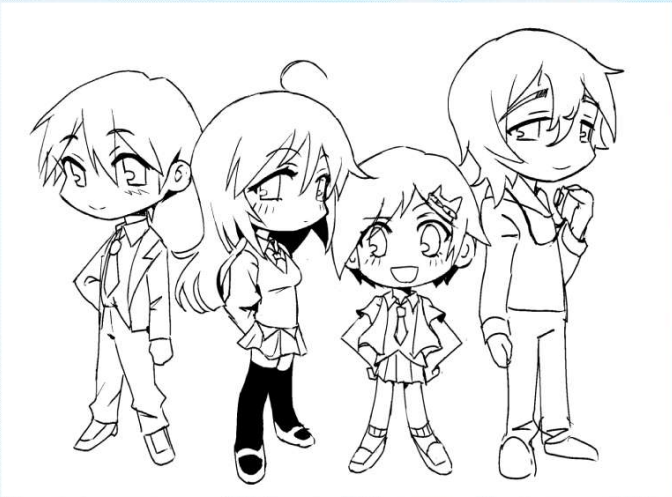
Okay, I'll share one funny thing, and one more serious thing. I love it when games or anime have to come up with knock-off brand names that are still recognizable to the audience. The staff and I have had more than a few laughs at some of the names we've come up with for products like that. You might even pick up on some of my personal tastes through these references! As for a more serious production secret, one of the later chapters was originally conceived of as a completely separate, one-off web novel. It even shares the original title of that novel. I realized that the broad strokes of its plot actually fit the themes and narrative of Further Skies perfectly, so I decided to absorb it into the game. I'm not telling you which chapter that is... yet, anyway.

9. Do you have any socials, websites, or projects you'd like to plug?

I'd like to shout out three releases by members and friends of Ena Project! These games aren't part of our circle's catalogue of works, but you can think of them as part of our extended family, haha. Annabelle, who specializes in the 3D-rendered materials you'll see in Further Skies, released the demo for her game 'Far From Paradise' via her studio Nemophilia Dreams. Yasmine, one of our artists, also released a demo for her game 'if you stay' via her studio YukimiSoft. I'd be remiss if I didn't shout out the recent release of the first volume of 'Kusari Doi' by my dear friend Lain Artificial. All three are very talented and kind people, and I'm hoping we can get more eyes on their work!

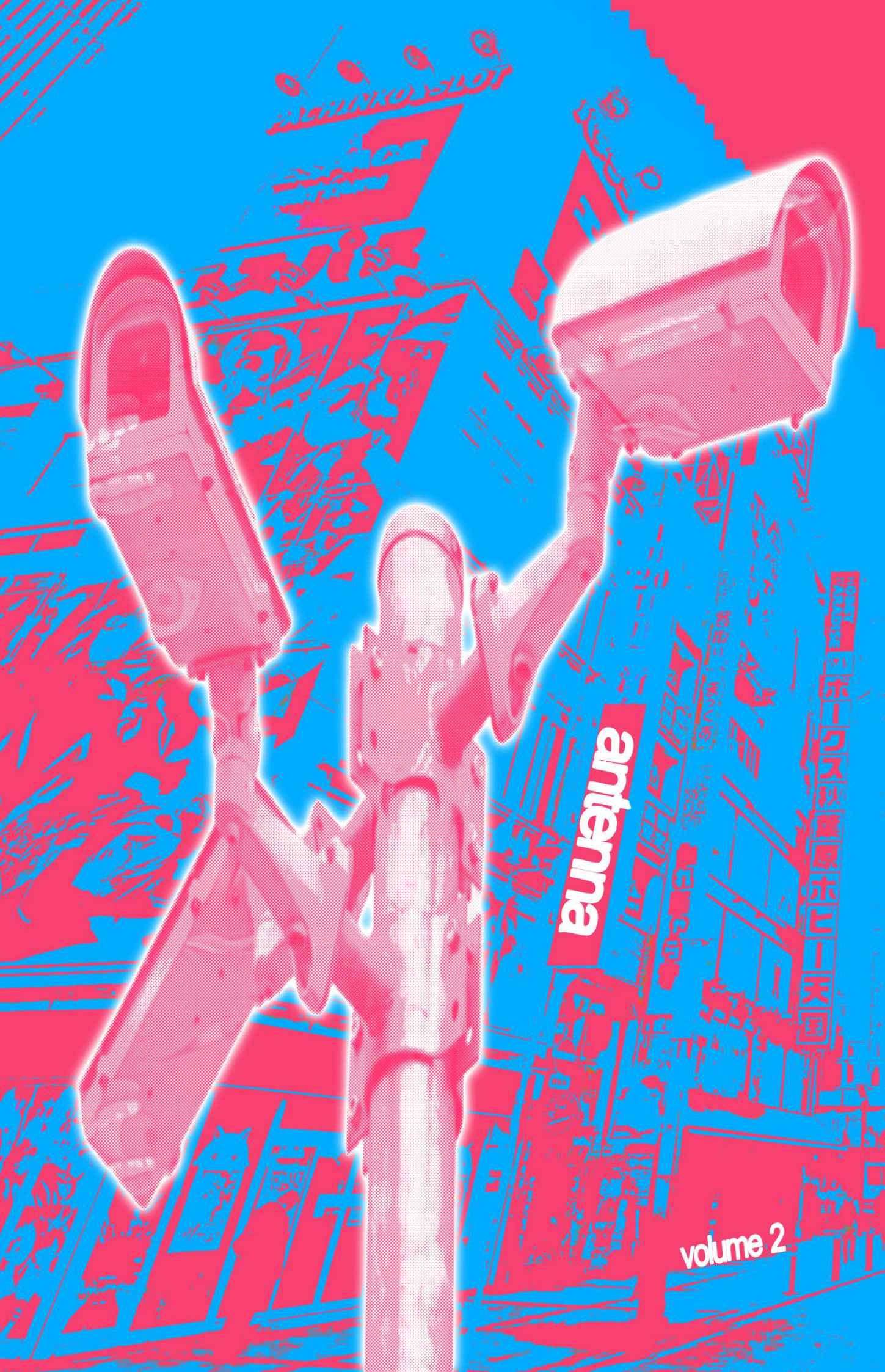
10. Any closing thoughts?

Above all else, I'd like to thank our audience for their commendable patience and endless support as we've gotten through the early stages of work on Further Skies. Now that we're looking at production, the release of the first chapter, Azure Blue Sky, feels evermore tangible with each passing day. We are a circle from all around the globe passionate about eroge and the very heart of otaku culture – self-expression and community without restraint. I hope our love and passion carries through our work and provides you with an experience that means something to you. Thank you to my team, my loved ones, and my audience for reminding me that there's value in giving this project my all.



カケラSKY is the co-founder and president of Ena Project. They serve as the director and author of the circle's debut work, the 18+ kinetic novel Further Skies, and have also contributed to the game as a composer, arranger, UI designer, and character designer. Outside of their work with Ena Project, カケラSKY is also a blogger, convention panelist, and former amateur translator with a lifelong fascination with otaku art and culture. They are a firm believer in self-expression, artistic freedom, and the limitless power of the traditional, long-skirted maid uniform.





antenna

volume 2

For a genre so often associated with madness, conspiracy, and psychological collapse, denpa is surprisingly difficult to define.

Perhaps that is because denpa has never been about a collection of tropes. It is a feeling. A disturbance. A faint signal buried beneath the noise of ordinary life. It emerges in moments when reality begins to feel unstable—when communication fails, when loneliness becomes overwhelming, when a person finds themselves trapped between what they know to be true and what they desperately want to believe. Denpa stories inhabit that space between certainty and delusion, connection and isolation, truth and perception.

What draws so many of us to these stories is not merely their darkness, but their honesty. Beneath the paranoia, violence, and surrealism is often something deeply human: the fear of being misunderstood, the desire to be seen, the struggle to find meaning in a world that can feel indifferent or incomprehensible. Denpa fiction gives shape to anxieties that are often difficult to articulate. It asks uncomfortable questions about identity, memory, reality, and the stories we tell ourselves to survive.

In many ways, denpa feels more relevant now than ever. We live in an age defined by endless streams of information, fragmented communities, algorithmic feedback loops, and increasingly blurred boundaries between the real and the virtual. Every day we are bombarded with signals competing for our attention, each claiming to reveal some deeper truth. The line between genuine connection and artificial intimacy grows thinner. We are more connected than at any point in human history, yet many people report feeling profoundly alone. Denpa did not predict the modern world, but it often feels uniquely equipped to examine it.

Antenna was created as a space to explore that examination.

This zine is not intended to provide a single, definitive interpretation of the genre. Instead, it is a collection of perspectives from people who have found something meaningful within these works. The essays, artwork, criticism, and creative pieces collected here approach denpa from different angles, sometimes agreeing with one another and sometimes contradicting each other entirely. That diversity of interpretation is part of what makes the genre so enduring. Denpa invites participation. It asks its audience to question what they are seeing, to fill in gaps, to wrestle with ambiguity, and to sit with uncertainty.

The title Antenna reflects that spirit. An antenna receives signals that would otherwise pass unnoticed through the air around us. It transforms invisible transmissions into something perceptible. In much the same way, the works featured in this publication attempt to tune into frequencies that are easy to overlook: private fears, hidden desires, forgotten memories, and the strange emotional undercurrents that run beneath everyday life. Some of these signals arrive clearly. Others are distorted. Many are difficult to interpret. Yet all of them are worth listening to.

Whether you are a longtime denpa enthusiast or encountering the genre for the first time, I hope this collection encourages you to look beyond surface-level definitions and engage with the ideas that make these stories resonate. Denpa is not simply about broken minds or distorted realities. At its best, it is about people searching for meaning in a world that rarely offers easy answers.

Thank you for spending your time with this project. Thank you to every contributor who shared their work, their thoughts, and their passion. Most of all, thank you for listening.

The signal is out there. What you make of it is up to you.

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